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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the four 2001 issues of a publication providing a forum for scholarly reviews and discussion of developmental research and implications for social policies affecting children. The topics featured in each of the issues are: (1) "Youth Civic Development: Implications of Research for Social Policy and Programs" (Constance A. Flanagan and Nakesha Faison); (2) "Self-Sufficiency Programs and Parenting Interventions: Lessons from New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration" (Nancy E. Reichman and Sara S. McLanahan); (3) "Strategic Frame Analysis: Reframing America's Youth" (Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. and Susan Nall Bales); and (4) "Adolescents as Adults in Court: A Developmental Perspective on the Transfer of Juveniles to Criminal Court" (Laurence Steinberg and Elizabeth Cauffman). (Each issue contains references.) (KB)

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Social Policy Report

2001

Lonnie Sherrod, Editor

Society for Research in Child Development

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Social Policy Report

Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away

Volume XV, Number 1 2001

Youth Civic Development: Implications of Research for Social Policy and Programs

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Summary

Democracies must insure that each new generation of citizens identify with the common good and become engaged members of their communities. Such goals are prominent in the missions of public schools and community youth organizations. This report summarizes research which points to directions youth programs and policies should follow to achieve these civic goals.

First, public spaces must be inclusive of all youth. This means that adults in such settings (teachers, principals, coaches of sports teams and mentors in community based organizations) should insist on tolerance as the basis for social interaction and should intervene to stop acts of intolerance. It means that all youth should have a voice in defining group goals and that the groups to which they belong should provide a forum for deliberative discourse — where citizens learn how to discuss and negotiate fair resolutions of differing views. And, rather than targeting specific individuals, programs in conflict resolution should be universal efforts that influence norms about how members of a Civil Society interact in the public spaces we share.

Second, the values with which we raise our youth are the foundation for their political views and for the society they will create. To the extent that values focus on enhancing the self rather than connecting personal interests to the public interest, young people will be less aware that the exercise of rights implies obligations to the community. In such a situation social trust, the glue of Civil Society, will be undermined.

Finally, to promote democracy youth need to know the full story, not just the 'good parts' of history. If they appreciate that history and politics are controversial, they may see the importance of taking a stand and of adding their voice to the debate.

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Social Policy Report

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From the Editor

In this issue of the *Social Policy Report*, the third that Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and I have produced, Connie Flanagan and Nakesha Faison address youth civic development.

Robert Putnam's paper some years ago, "Bowling Alone," argued that we face a civic crisis in this country, particularly in regard to youth. Civic participation, Putnam claimed, is at an all-time low. He has since produced a book. Although his argument is controversial—some argue that civic participation has changed but has not decreased appreciably—it has spurred attention to the topic of civic involvement, particularly in young people.

There have been two periods of research attention to political socialization. In the 1950's research reflected the developmental dogma of that time emphasizing early development and viewing children as rather passive recipients of socialization influences. The 1970's witnessed renewed attention due in part to the variety of social movements such as civil rights and the anti-Vietnam war reaction. This period of research focused on youth but was not very developmental in orientation.

Connie Flanagan was one of the first researchers to enter this field in the 1990's. I was pleased that she approached the William T. Grant Foundation for support at the time I was Vice President there. She obtained a Faculty Scholar Award for her seven nation study of youth political development. She now leads the field.

I have a particular personal professional interest in this topic. It represents the latest version of my longstanding interest in social cognitive development and I will follow the work of Flanagan and others in doing my own research on this topic at Fordham. This article does an outstanding job of addressing the implications of research for policy. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and I hope that this article may have some of the effect of Putnam's early writings by fueling both research and policy attention to this important but understudied and socially ignored area.

Lonnie R. Sherrod, Ph.D., Editor
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Youth Civic Development: Implications of Research for Social Policy and Programs

Constance A. Flanagan and Nakesha Faison
Pennsylvania State University

Developing the civic literacy, skills, and attachments of the younger generation are prominent goals of virtually every public school in the United States. Likewise, most non formal youth organizations such as Scouts, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs list such civic values as responsibility, leadership, and patriotism as conspicuous objectives of their programs, and activities such as team projects or public service to the community as means by which to attain those goals. Even the rationale for sports include their potential for teaching young people cooperation, team work, and the value of fair play. Yet there is very little known about program effectiveness in these areas because the civic goals of youth programs have rarely been evaluated. Indeed, were we to ask teachers, coaches, or the staff of youth programs to define the 'civic' outcomes of their programs, we might find an array of meanings for terms such as leadership, responsibility, or patriotism. (The recent Supreme Court decision allowing the Boy Scouts of America to exclude gay members from the organization illustrates the potential for contestation over the meaning of 'civic values').

Defining Terms: Civic Literacy, Skills, and Attachment

The terms 'civic' and 'political' connote different things today but have similar roots historically. Whereas the Latin root, 'civis', refers to a citizen, the Greek equivalent is 'polites', a member of the polity (Walzer, 1989). Today the term 'political' or 'politics' connotes (erroneously in our view) the affairs of state or the business of government. For this reason we have chosen the broader 'civic' connotation for this report.

By civic literacy we refer to knowledge about community affairs, political issues and the processes whereby citizens effect change, and about how one could become informed if they were not already. Civic skills include competencies in achieving group goals. Social skills such as active listening and perspective taking when applied to civic goals would fit in this category as would skills in leadership, public speaking, contacting public officials, and organizing meetings to insure that all participants have a voice in the process. By civic attachment we allude to an affective or emotional connection to the community or polity. Youth who lack such attachments are often called disaffected. They neither identify with nor feel that they count in community affairs. In contrast, civic attachment implies a feeling that one matters, has a voice and a stake in public affairs, and thus wants to be a contributing member of the community.

Correlates of Civic Literacy, Skills, and Attachments

The importance of civic literacy to democracy is indicated by the fact that, among adults, political knowledge is positively associated with levels of social tolerance and engagement in community affairs (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Among adolescents, parental education is positively associated with their political knowledge, participatory attitudes, and behavior (Chapman, Nolin, & Kline, 1997). Beyond family background, adolescents' civic knowledge is correlated with the civic content they learn in school, its range and recency, to class discussions of current events, and to participation in student government and community service (Chapman et al., 1997; Niemi & Junn, 1998). National assessments of high-school students' civic knowledge indicate that they know most about issues that matter to them such as a citizen's right to due process and which level of government issues a driver's license (Niemi & Junn, 1998).

National assessments of high-school students' civic knowledge indicate that they know most about issues that matter to them such as a citizen's right to due process and which level of government issues a driver's license.

Practices in families also appear to make a difference. Family communication styles that engage young people in the discussion of controversial issues and encourage them to hold autonomous opinions are related to greater civic knowledge, interest, and exposure to political information (Chaffee & Yang, 1990; McLeod, 2000; Niemi & Junn, 1998) as well as to their tolerance (Owen & Dennis, 1987) and ability to see political issues from more than one simple perspective (Santolupo & Pratt, 1994). Tolerance in young people also is higher among those who are involved in political or quasi-political activities (Avery, 1992).

In terms of civic attachment or affection for the polity, trust may play a key role. Social trust, defined as a belief that 'most people' are generally fair and helpful rather than merely out for their own gain (Smith, 1997), is considered the social glue of a Civil Society and the grease that eases collective life and democratic governance (Putnam, 2000). Analyses of the General Social Survey indicate that the generation gap in social trust grew between 1973 and 1997 due to declines in the youngest adult cohorts' beliefs that 'most

people' are trustworthy, helpful, and fair (Smith, 2000). Why this is the case is not entirely clear. One thesis points to demographic changes in the composition of the generations and in whom they consider in judgments about 'most people'. Others contend that declines in social trust are associated with increasing self-interest over the past few decades (Rahn & Transue, 1998), an issue we revisit in our discussion of values later in this report.

Trends in Voting and Volunteerism among Youth

Voting provides a barometer of the public's trust in the political process and in government. In any era, young adults are typically less likely than their elders to vote. But the generation gap has increased in recent years with the youngest cohorts of adults least likely to participate in the process (Putnam, 2000; Smith, 2000). That trend is not unique to the United States but is found across western democracies.

Surveys of American youth indicate that, whereas they have little confidence in their ability to effect change through the political process, they do feel that they can make a difference via voluntary efforts in their local communities (National Association of Secretaries of State, 2000). In contrast to declining participation in the electoral process, over the past decade community volunteerism has become the norm among young people (Sagawa, 1998). In 1997 an annual nationwide study of college freshmen found that 73% of incoming freshmen had performed community service during their senior year in high school, an increase of 11% over 1989 (Astin & Sax, 1998).

The question is how to link their community volunteer work to larger civic issues and to engage them in a broader political process. One suggestion is provided in Yates and Youniss' (1997) work on community service in which reflection and group discussions enabled students to connect their individual experiences of service to broader political issues. Another is provided in national assessments of high-school students' civic knowledge. Niemi and Junn (1998) note that students understand local government better than federal government. Although the latter is emphasized in their classes, the authors contend that the federal level is distant from the realities of their everyday lives. Enabling youth to connect issues in their everyday lives to local elections is one of the goals of a new project led by the Annenberg School for Communication. Known as Student Voices, this project provides opportunities for high school students to raise their concerns with candidates running for public office in their communities.

Research on Youth Civic Development

We turn next to a discussion of developmental research and the ways it could inform the civic goals of schools and community youth development programs. We note at the outset that this has typically not been a topic of human development studies. Nor, as already stated, has there been much evaluation work on the civic impacts of youth programs. The research from which we have drawn is often, although not always, correlational. Yet, in the absence of prospective designs we believe there is convergent evidence from various studies that can inform policies and programs.

Our main points can be stated at the outset. First, the civic identities, political views and values of young people are rooted in their social relations and in the opportunities they have for civic practice (Flanagan & Gallay, 1995; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). Second, there is a pivotal role for adults who work with young people (teachers, coaches, counsellors, recreation program staff) in conveying the principles of tolerance that bind members of the polity together. They do this both by modeling those principles in their own behavior and by expecting the same norms of tolerance in youth interactions. Our final point is related: The values that we emphasize in child-rearing and that structure institutions and norms of social interaction will shape the political views and civic commitments young people will develop.

The Role of Adults: Communicating the Principles of a Civil Society

Research Findings

Political scientists have argued that the stability of a democratic polity like the United States depends on diffuse support in the population for the principles on which the democracy is based (Easton & Dennis, 1969). From a developmental perspective, this implies that, if a democracy is to remain secure and stable, each new generation of her citizens must believe in the system and believe that it works for people like them. Our studies of different racial and ethnic groups of American youth point to the pivotal role of teachers in this regard (Flanagan, Gill, & Gallay, 1998).

We have found that, to the extent that a civic ethos describes the climate at school, students are more likely to believe that America is a just society where equal opportunity is the rule. The ethos to which we refer is one in which teachers insure that all students are treated equally. Not only do teachers hold the same high standards for and respect the ideas of all students, but they insist that students listen to and respect one another as well. And, if there are instances of intolerance or bullying, the teacher intervenes to stop the incivility. Note that by tolerance we are not referring to apathy or indifference. Students are encouraged to develop their own opinions. They are not asked to agree with one another,

only to respect one another's rights to self-determination.

Adolescents' civic commitments also were associated with a civic ethos at school. Those who felt their teachers practiced this ethic were more committed to the kinds of public interest goals that would sustain a democratic polity, i.e., service to the common good (contributing to their communities and serving their country) and promoting equality (working to improve race relations and helping the disenfranchised). In other studies similar teaching practices were associated with civic competencies in young people including their ability to critically assess social issues (Newmann, 1990), their tolerance of dissenting opinions (Ehman, 1980), and their knowledge about international affairs (Torney-Purta & Lansdale, 1986).

Affection for the Polity among Ethnic Minority Youth

Teachers' insistence on a civic ethic is especially important in an increasingly diverse society. By the year 2050, more than half of the population in the United States will be members of ethnic minority groups (Roberts, 1993) and a disproportionate number of those citizens will be children. There has been relatively little research on the processes whereby children develop an affection for the polity and become engaged citizens. Yet we know even less about these processes among youth who are members of ethnic minority groups. And what we do know does not engender optimism.

According to some ethnographers, the political disaffection of minority youth should be expected because they are so frequently marginalized from the mainstream. As Milbrey McLaughlin (1993) observes, "There are powerful signals to minority youth about their value, social legitimacy, and future and many respond to these signals by retreating to the confines of their cultural group and by distrusting the possibility or desirability of ever becoming part of the broader society" (p. 43). Those sentiments are echoed in Sanchez-Jankowski's (1992) interviews with Chicano youth in which one 17-year-old reflects, "Before I knew anything about how the American government worked, I could tell Chicanos didn't have much say in how things got done 'cause of the way Anglo people would treat us".

Youth opinion surveys also point to the lower confidence that disadvantaged and ethnic minority youth have in the state and its institutions. Mistrust of the government and cynicism about its attention to the average citizen is higher among disadvantaged youth (Hepburn & Popwell, 1992). Even when socioeconomic factors are controlled, national studies of high-school students indicate that racial differences in political efficacy and trust persist. Both Latino and African-American high-school students are more skeptical than their white peers about the amount of attention the government pays to the average person (Niemi & Junn, 1998). According to Abramson (1983), 1967 was a turning point in such sentiments. Prior to that year, similar feelings of political trust were reported by African-American and white youth but since that time most surveys find lower levels of political trust among African-American youth.

According to political socialization theorists, stable governance in a democracy is based on diffuse support in the population for the system. The foundation for that support, the scholars believed, occurred early in development when children placed their trust in the benevolence of leaders who presumably governed with the child's best interests in mind. The president and the police were considered the 'head and tail' symbols in children's schema about the state and its authority (Easton & Dennis, 1969). Whether these symbols serve a similar role today remains an open question. Research in the wake of Watergate indicates that children's and adolescents' support for leaders is not unconditional. It can be undermined when those leaders abrogate the civic trust (Dennis & Webster, 1975; Greenstein & Polsby, 1975; Sigel & Hoskin, 1981). And, once lost, the belief that the government can be trusted to do the right thing 'most of the time' is difficult to recover. Analyses of panel data following a sample of 1965 high school seniors into their late thirties showed that reactions to political events such as Watergate or the Vietnam War had an enduring effect on their trust in the government (Damico, Conway, & Damico, 2000).

It may well be through such proximal authority figures as teachers, school administrators, coaches, or the staff of community based youth organizations that children learn to accept the more distal authority of the state as legitimate and binding.

Policy Implications: Adults' Roles in Reinforcing Democracy

If neither the president nor the police, the so-called 'head and tail' symbols of the state, can be expected to engender diffuse support for the polity and its principles, other authority figures may need to fill that gap. It may well be through such proximal authority figures as teachers, school administrators, coaches, or the staff of community based youth organizations that children learn to accept the more distal authority of the state as legitimate and binding.

Tolerance has been called the litmus test of a democracy (Elshtain, 1995). It is also the most fundamental principle on which the United States of America was founded and thus the principle that should unite us as a nation (Walzer, 1990). We have argued that when teachers model a civic ethic and insist that students treat one another in a civil fashion, they play a critical role in promoting the younger generation's support for the polity. Decisions at the institutional level are critical as well and we turn to this point in our next section.

Bullying and Intolerance

Schools differ in the extent to which they have adopted intervention vs. laissez-faire policies concerning intolerance and bullying. Anecdotally, some school administrators in our studies shared with us the belief that students need to learn to handle their disagreements "on their own". In principle, we might agree. But in practice a laissez-faire policy does not enable students to settle differences in a civil fashion. Rather, a hands off policy tells young people (bullies, victims, and bystanders alike) that there are no principles governing social interactions. The rules are simply whatever you can get away with. Because bullying has been a fact of life for generations and across societies, there is a tendency to dismiss it as a problem that will go away as "kids grow out of it". But this is one of the myths about bullying. Young people who bully peers often become adults who use violence to settle disputes. They learn that the strategy is effective. They get their way.

There are typically asymmetries of power between bullies and victims (Olweus, 1992). In our studies, for example, it was the adolescents from racial and ethnic minority groups who were more likely to report teachers' intervening to stop acts of peer intolerance. As the research on intergroup relations has shown, status differences based on age, physical size, language, race and ethnicity do not level themselves by default. The leadership and decisions of adults are ultimately called for (Schofield, 1995).

Efficacy of Interventions to Curb Intolerance

Universal prevention efforts can be effective as the campaign to curb bullying in Norway has shown. In the early eighties, although 15% of the nation's students reported some involvement in bully/victim problems, a laissez-faire attitude prevailed (Olweus, 1992). But the political will to address the problem was considerable and the universal intervention was effective. Research dispelling myths and informing the public about bully/victim problems was widely distributed. A comprehensive set of recommendations listed actions that could be taken at the individual (serious talks with bullies and victims), classroom (cooperative learning, class discussions to develop civil norms), and school level (changing the school climate). Evaluations revealed a reduction in bullying in classrooms that shifted norms toward more civil behavior and provided public time for class meetings to reinforce those norms.

In the United States the topic of bullying has received neither the scientific nor the policy attention it has enjoyed in other nations (Smith et al., 1999). Although it has been the subject of popular films, magazines, and talk shows, when it comes to educational programs and scientific literature in the United States, bullying is "subsumed within broader issues such as school safety or violence" (Harachi, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1999, p. 282). Ironically, schools in the United States are held legally accountable for insuring children's well being and, by law, must report any suspicions of child abuse outside of school. Yet concerted efforts to address peer bully/victim problems in schools have not become widespread in the United States.

Policy Implications: Resolving Conflict in a Civil Fashion

The political will and leadership of adults is important. However, youth intolerance and exclusion will often occur when no adults are around. If school districts and communities genuinely want young people to 'work it out on their own', they can enable them by making training in conflict resolution more common in communities. In 1997 the National Institution for Dispute Resolution estimated that there were over 8,500 school-based conflict resolution programs in the nation's public schools. From skills in managing personal anger and interpersonal disputes to deliberative discourse practices and law related education, programs cover a wide spectrum of skills and exist for all age groups. Peer mediation is a common aspect of most programs, as is training school staff in techniques for resolving conflicts. A national clearinghouse of programs is provided by the Conflict Resolution Education Network organized by the joint efforts of the National Association for Mediation in Education and the National Institution for Dispute Resolution. (For an in depth evaluation of three conflict resolution programs, see the *Social Policy Report* by Henrich, Brown, & Aber, 1999).

Policy Implications: Zero Tolerance vs. Teaching Tolerance

Zero Tolerance

In response to a rash of high profile incidents of youth violence during the spring of 1999, many schools responded to concerns about public safety by increasing surveillance,

enacting 'zero tolerance' policies, and expelling troublemakers. Although safety is the goal, these policies may be off the mark as measures to guarantee public safety for the following reasons. First, there should be no tolerance of violence. Yet expulsion of 'troublemakers' may simply send the problem elsewhere. Young people who are accustomed to handling conflict violently need to learn other ways to deal with it. Programs that help aggressive children learn to monitor and redirect their anger not only enable the young person to live a more productive life but ultimately protect public safety.

Second, zero tolerance is not the same as teaching tolerance. Indirect forms of bullying include ostracism and exclusion of victims from the group (Olweus, 1992). Thus, proactive efforts to teach tolerance and develop an inclusive climate are crucial. When the norms of interaction include listening and respecting one another and when the teacher him/herself holds the same standards for all students, a tone of civility is established and the likelihood of bullying minimized. Finally, we worry that surveillance may erode the very social trust and solidarity that we will argue in the next section of this report are essential to developing young people's feelings of loyalty to the polity and their motivation for civic engagement. As national studies of adolescent health and risk have shown, school policies and rules are less effective in curtailing problems than are school climates of inclusion in which students in general feel a sense of belonging and connection to others in the institution (Resnick et al., 1997). And, as Kurt Lewin (1951) argued, group norms affect individual values but their efficacy depends on a sense of group cohesion and solidarity.

Indirect forms of bullying include ostracism and exclusion of victims from the group.

Teaching Tolerance

In our view a public orientation is needed in conflict resolution programs. That is, to meet a civic criterion, programs should take an environmental rather than an individual focus. A public orientation helps to establish norms about how members of a Civil Society interact in public spaces. It creates a forum for deliberative discourse — where citizens learn skills that enable them to discuss and negotiate fair resolutions of their differences. In addition, to the extent that such programs actively engage young people in deciding on the norms of group interaction, they promote 'buy in' by all the members. As a result they enlarge the pool of potential bystanders who might intervene and object to instances of intolerance and come to the defense of victims who are being ostracized. Ultimately, such universal efforts shift group norms toward greater inclusion and tolerance and contribute to a shared understanding of how members of a Civil Society treat one another.

Institutions and Climates Promoting Peer Solidarity and Pride

According to Aristotle, the polis is a network of friends bound together by the mutual pursuit of a common good. Whereas vertical relationships between patrons and clients are the structure underlying an authoritarian social order, horizontal networks that build trust between equals are the basis for a democratic social order (Putnam, 1993). Extracurricular activities at school and non formal youth organizations in communities serve this purpose. Participation in such activities and organizations offers young people opportunities to explore what it means to be a member of 'the public', and to work out the reciprocity between rights and obligations in the meaning of citizenship. As a member of a group, the young person helps to define its meaning and has a "say" in defining group goals. By having a say, youth exercise the citizen's right to self-determination. But self determination is not enough. Democratic societies rely on persons with "democratic dispositions", i.e. "a preparedness to work with others different from oneself toward shared ends; a combination of strong convictions with a readiness to compromise in the recognition that one can't always get everything one wants; and a sense of individuality and a commitment to civic goods that are not the possession of one person or one small group alone" (Elshtain, 1995, p. 2).

In our research we have conceived of young people's experiences of membership in institutions and organizations as the developmental foundation for a political community and for the ties that bind members of that community together. The importance of student solidarity as a factor in developing identification with the common good emerged in our comparative study in which adolescents from four fledgling democracies and three stable democracies participated. Across countries, youth were more likely to commit to public interest goals such as serving their communities and country *if* they felt a solidarity with peers at school and *if* they felt that most students in the school were proud to be part of an institution where caring transcended the borders of social cliques (Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998).

We should note that student solidarity is not a property of individuals. Rather, it is a student's perceptions of the

collective properties of his/her school. Similar to the 'collective efficacy' of neighborhoods where residents act in the public interest (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997), ours is a measure of the collective properties of the student body. As such, it taps an inclusive climate in which students generally feel that they and their fellow students matter to one another and to the institution.

We do not mean to imply that social cliques are absent from these schools. Rather cliques do not override the broader climate of inclusiveness in the school. Social cliques seem to be a natural support system that help young people move through the adolescent years. But as Erikson (1968) warned, cliques pose dangers to democracy if youth have no opportunities to connect to others beyond their narrow borders. Dewey (1916) listed two aspects of groups that make them democratic. First, to the extent that the interests of the members are numerous and varied, it should be more likely that everyone would play an integral role in the group and less likely that only a few people would 'take charge'. Second, to the extent that interactions with others outside the group were "full and free", the group should be less likely to be isolationist and exclusive. Isolationist groups, Dewey warned, were not only undemocratic but antisocial.

Tolerance and interdependence are essential aspects of a democratic identity and participation in extracurricular activities and youth organizations play a role in building these qualities in young people.

Tolerance and interdependence are essential aspects of a democratic identity and participation in extracurricular activities and youth organizations play a role in building these qualities in young people. Participation in such activities in one's youth is associated with higher involvement in civic and political activity in adulthood (Verba et al., 1995; Youniss et al., 1997). Even when socioeconomic status and academic achievement are controlled, involvement in extracurricular activities is related to later involvement in organizations such as the PTA, communities of faith, or labor unions (Hanks & Eckland, 1978; Otto, 1975) as well as to political action such as voting, writing letters to the editor, or contacting local officials (Otto, 1975). But there is also evidence that involvement in non-formal youth organizations may play a role in promoting inter-group understanding. One study found, for example, that participation in extracurricular activities was related to positive race relations (Holland & Andre, 1987).

Policy Implications: Equal Opportunities for Public Engagement

The issue of equal opportunity for youth to participate in extracurricular and community organizations is a policy question which has received little attention. The fact that involvement in such organizations seems to protect young people from health-compromising behaviors (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000) is reason alone to raise the issue of equal access. However, we would argue that, besides keeping youth out of trouble, these institutions of Civil Society, what Tocqueville (1848) dubbed the "schools of democracy", connect young people to the broader polity and foster their commitment to its service. Thus, if access to community clubs and extracurricular activities is unevenly distributed, we should not be surprised if those youth who have few opportunities to connect are disaffected politically and disengaged from civic activity as well.

According to analyses of national longitudinal data, youth from more advantaged families are more likely to be involved in community clubs, teams, or organizations and involvement in such groups is highly related to the likelihood of being engaged in community service (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1998). Connell and Halpern-Felsher (1997) have observed that the institutions that provide primary services to youth — Little League, YMCA, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. — are typically less represented, with fewer resources, in poorer neighborhoods. Taken together, these studies suggest that there are multiple ways that socioeconomic advantages in families and in neighborhoods afford children opportunities for civic connection and practice.

Among adults, higher socioeconomic status is positively associated with political efficacy and involvement. But beyond personal disadvantage, when poverty is concentrated in a community, it reduces the number of civic organizations, church groups, and indirect ties to public officials that would enable residents to address their community's problems (Cohen & Dawson, 1993). The political advantages of socioeconomic status are stockpiled over a lifetime (Verba et al., 1995) and may in part be rooted in the uneven opportunities across different communities that youth have to engage in clubs, youth organizations, and public service.

Policy Implications: Innovative Programs

Innovative directions in community based programs illustrate ways to maximize civic learning opportunities for young people. For example, recognizing disparities in the stock of social capital across different communities, the Citizen Schools project in Boston has reached across borders of neighborhood and social class to link citizens (adults and

children alike) in projects that produce public goods for their communities. Both the middle school students and the adults from the greater Boston area gain civic practice. They also develop connections to members in their community that they might otherwise never encounter and learn about opportunities in the greater Boston area about which they would otherwise be unaware. YouthBuild is another example of an innovative youth led community development and employment training program. The 16-24 year old participants learn job skills in the construction trades and in the process produce affordable housing units for residents of their communities. Putatively, a key ingredient of the program's success is the fact that the young participants are in charge. Trainees learn leadership and decision making skills which they exercise by governing the YouthBuild organization and also by participating in the public arena (including testifying before Congress) on behalf of their communities. As Tony Minor, one of the founding members of the first YouthBuild program in East Harlem notes, by experiencing success, the young people believe that they too share in the American dream.

Values are standards we use to judge our own behavior as well as a basis for our political views and positions on public policies.

A third example of an innovative direction in community youth development is the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), a national effort to transform youth sports. Concerned that the potential of sports to teach team work, cooperation, and fair play was being eroded by a 'win at all cost' mentality, the PCA has returned team work to the game. Star athletes do not enjoy a privileged status but live by the rules that apply to everyone. Like the teacher in our studies who insists on a civic ethic in the classroom, the role of the coach is considered pivotal in transforming youth sports. But the Alliance is aware that coaches typically lack training in understanding children's needs and their own roles as mentors. Thus, training coaches is a high priority of the program. Because sports engages large numbers of young people, the Positive Coaching model could have a ripple effect across communities and thus holds promise for shifting norms toward a more Civil Society.

Finally, restorative community justice is a new approach to juvenile crime. In contrast to a retributive framework in which the state punishes or treats individual law breakers, restorative justice is a different way of thinking about crime and justice. Because crime is considered an act that harms people and violates relationships in a community, restorative justice practices emphasize the juvenile offender's obligation to repair the harm done to victims and to the broader community. Practices such as victim-offender mediation and conflict resolution are designed to repair relationships. Social support is provided both to victims and offenders in practices such as circle sentencing and family group conferencing in which multiple parties have a voice in the determination of community justice. Practices including remediation of the harm done to the victim and community service to repair the violation of the community insure that young offenders know that they have to be accountable for their actions. And service done in the company of law abiding adults is a means of strengthening cross-generation relationships and reintegrating the young offender into the community (Bazemore & Walgrave, 1999).

The Relationship between Personal Values and a Civic Ethic

In his treatise on *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville (1848/1966) pointed to the importance of mores, common practices or habits that shaped the character of democracy in America. He observed the ardent commitment of the average American to the freedom and rights of the individual. But he warned that a preoccupation with the self unmoderated by group commitments and a connection to others, could create people who "owe no man anything and hardly expect anything from anybody" (p. 508). Ultimately, this would lead to a disintegration of the social fabric, and undermine the very civil liberties Americans prized by leading to more control "from above".

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in Tocqueville's thesis as concerns are voiced about self-interest eclipsing commitments to the commonwealth (Bellah et al., 1985). Empirical work suggests that there is reason for concern. Trend studies have pointed to increasing materialism and declining social trust among adolescents over the past few decades (Rahn & Transue, 1998). Self-interest and materialist values also are associated with lower levels of tolerance: Among high-school and college students, they are related to negative stereotypes of African-Americans (Katz & Hass, 1988), to anti-foreigner attitudes among German students (Boehnke, Hagan, & Hefler, 1998), and to anti-immigrant attitudes among American youth (Flanagan & Gallay, 1999).

Personal, Familial, and Societal Values

Values are standards we use to judge our own behavior. They also are a basis for our political views and positions on public policies. From a developmental perspective, values

help young people define who they are. And family values provide a context for those decisions in part by framing a view of the world and how one should relate to 'others' in that world. Societies also differ in the way they have defined social goals and interpreted what is just or fair in their social policies. In fact, the political scientist, David Easton (1953), described politics as the 'authoritative allocation of values' (p. 129), alluding to the connection between political views, policies, and widespread norms and practices in a society.

In our cross-national comparative studies, we have looked at values at the macro level of society and at the micro level of families and individuals. The nations in that project (Australia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia, Sweden, and the United States) differed in the degree to which they had adopted market principles vs. principles of a command (and typically strong social welfare) economy. We found that youth who are accustomed to a welfare state consider it the duty of the government to support those in need (Jonsson & Flanagan, 2000). But we also found that practices in the settings of development were logically linked to the principles of the politico-economic order. For example, in nations where the principles of a market economy were in place, it was common for children to learn the connection between wages and work by earning an allowance for doing chores (Bowes, Flanagan, & Taylor, in press).

In all countries, family values of compassion and social responsibility were the most consistent correlates of teen involvement in service in their community, of their commitment to serving their country and their society, and of their empathy for disenfranchised groups.

Personal Values and Commitments to the Common Good

At the same time, there was substantial variation within each country in adolescents' views of justice, their concerns about social inequality, and their involvement in civic action. Across countries, personal and family values were consistently related to these views and behaviors. Among youth in Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic, endorsements of liberal or market principles were positively related to the teen's beliefs in the efficacy of individual initiative and negatively related to their concerns that economic disparities were on the rise in their country (Macek et al., 1998). In all seven nations, teens with higher altruistic and empathic values were more likely than their compatriots to base decisions about resource distribution on people's needs (Flanagan & Bowes, 2000). Likewise, in all countries, family values of compassion and social responsibility were the most consistent correlates of teen involvement in service in their community (Flanagan, Jonsson, et al., 1998), of their commitment to serving their country and their society (Flanagan, Bowes, et al.,1998), and of their empathy for disenfranchised groups (Bowes & Flanagan, 2000).

American adolescents' theories about inequality also were concordant with their personal and familial values: Those who said poverty, unemployment, and homelessness are the fault of individuals (e.g., for failing to work hard) were more committed to materialist values whereas those who focused on the conditions in which poor people lived or pointed to the systemic roots of unemployment tended to be more altruistic and reported that compassion was emphasized in their families (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999). The extent to which a teen's goals and family values reflected self interest, materialism, and social vigilance or mistrust towards others vs. public interest and the common good were related to his/her conceptions of democracy as well (Flanagan, Gallay, & Nti, 2000): Those for whom material achievements were a high priority and whose families emphasized vigilance towards and mistrust of 'others' were more likely to emphasize the rights and freedoms of individuals. In contrast, youth with more altruistic values and whose families emphasized social responsibility were more likely to say that democracy is a form of government where principles of tolerance and civil liberties should prevail.

These differing views of democracy reflect core American values - communalism with an emphasis on egalitarian and humanitarian principles on the one hand and individualism emphasizing self-reliance, personal freedom, and material achievements on the other (Katz & Hass, 1988; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Lane, 1986; Verba & Orren, 1985). In fact, these values are rooted in historical traditions of liberalism and civic republicanism. In the former, individuals are conceived as bearers of rights with minimal emphasis on their civic obligations. By contrast, the republican tradition links one's own interests to the common good and emphasizes the democratic ideals of equality, social justice, and concern for others. In that tradition, citizens pursue what Tocqueville referred to as 'self interest properly understood', that is, enlightened by an awareness of how one's own interests are connected to those of the broader public.

Implications for Policy: Civic Education and Character Education

We have noted that diffuse support for democratic principles is necessary to insure stability in a democratic system. Next we focus on the United States and ask, what are the principles children are learning as those that bind us together as a people? To address that question, we draw from work on civic education and character education.

Civic Education

According to a recent content analysis of middle-school civics texts, democracy and citizenship are discussed within the framework of individual rights with comparatively little attention to civic responsibilities (Simmons & Avery, in press). These results are not surprising in light of the National Standards for Civics and Government from which both textbook publishers and teachers take their cues. A content analysis of those standards revealed disproportionate references to citizens' rights (and these were typically to individual rather than to group rights) when compared to responsibilities, and a lack of reciprocity between rights and obligations (Gonzales, Riedel, Avery, & Sullivan, in press). The inattention to citizen obligations may be symptomatic of a larger issue in civic education. According to Niemi and Junn (1998), in the areas of gender and race, civic education tends to emphasize the 'good things' (p. 151) such as the abolition of slavery, the end of legal segregation, and the enfranchisement of women. Yet students seem unaware that laws were actually used to segregate people and to prevent them from voting. If only the 'good things' about history are communicated, if political and historical questions are represented as settled rather than contested, then there may be no need to emphasize the obligations of citizens to take a stand and no perception on the part of youth that their voice in politics might matter.

Teachers often hesitate to draw attention to racial issues or to historical instances of intolerance, for fear that such attention will generate conflict (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). But that silence exacts a cost not only on minority children who may feel excluded but also on the collective resolve of future generations to decide about history and to choose a future with full knowledge of the past. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa recognized, if a society does not have accurate public knowledge about its past, however painful, it cannot move forward to create a new social order.

Character Education

Taking a stand — on historical or controversial issues — brings us to character education. Since 1995, the United States Department of Education has been providing grants to states under the Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Projects Program. Under this program, state education agencies work with local school districts to develop curricular materials, train teachers, and operate an information clearinghouse on character education. Character education encompasses a broad array of programs and we caution against generalizations. However, based on the research summarized in this report, we would apply a civic standard to character education programs by asking: a) to what extent is an orientation to the well being of others and the common good thematic in the program and b) to what extent are participants encouraged to think critically about and be actively engaged in the concerns of their community?

The exercise of character implies a capacity for thoughtful inquiry, open mindedness, information gathering, and reflection.

The term, character, connotes a distinctive mark, quality or trait. It is exhibited when we face dilemmas and have to take a stand, deciding between different alternatives. Thus, the exercise of character implies a capacity for thoughtful inquiry, open mindedness, information gathering, and reflection. These skills are not central components of some character education programs which instead adopt a didactic approach, teaching a prescribed set of personal virtues which basically encourage kids to 'be good'. To illustrate our point, we draw from the open-ended responses of adolescents in one of our studies when we asked them to list the characteristics of a 'good citizen'. Whereas many listed passive or what we might refer to as 'lowest common denominator' qualities, (i.e., someone who stayed out of trouble, didn't lie, cheat, or steal), others nominated as a 'good citizen' a proactive person who helped others, voted, contributed to the community, paid attention to current events, sought out information, and stood up for what s/he believed in. There are character education programs that encourage this more active and engaged citizenship. The "Giraffe Project", initiated in the state of Washington in 1982, is a good example. This story-based curriculum which encourages children to be active and compassionate citizens, teaches them about people with vision and courage who are willing to stick their necks out, take a stand, and solve their community's problems. This framework, like that of programs such as Facing History and Ourselves (see Henrich et al., 1999) and Teaching Tolerance from the Southern Poverty Law Center, help children understand that they are actors in a democracy with choices

to make and that their collective decisions shape the character and ultimately the history of their society.

Conclusion

We began this report by asking how developmental research could inform the civic goals of programs and policies for young people. We conclude with the following points. First, the leadership of adults in public spaces (teachers, principals, sports coaches, mentors of non formal youth groups) is essential in communicating the principles of tolerance that bind democratic polities together. This means that adults must insist that public spaces are climates of inclusion where membership transcends the borders of cliques. It also means that public programs provide all young people with practice in working as teams toward mutually defined goals and in resolving differences that may divide them. It means that conflict resolution programs should focus on universal efforts that have the potential to shift the norms of group interaction rather than target specific individuals to change.

Second, the values emphasized in education and child rearing will affect the kinds of citizens the younger generation will become as well as the kind of society they will create. To the extent that values focus on enhancing the self rather than connecting individual interests to those of a larger public, young people will be less oriented to the needs of others and less aware of their responsibilities for the common good. Finally, to promote a deep democracy, young people need to know the full story of history and be encouraged to become engaged in and take a stand on issues of concern to their communities.

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Purpose

Social Policy Report (ISSN 1075-7031) is published four times a year by the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD). Its purpose is twofold: (1) to provide policymakers with objective reviews of research findings on topics of current national interest, and (2) to inform the SRCD membership about current policy issues relating to children and about the state of relevant research.

Content

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Self-Sufficiency Programs and Parenting Interventions: Lessons from New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration

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Summary

Devolution has given states discretion over how they design welfare programs, and states have responded by providing a variety of supplemental supports to poor single mothers. One intervention that states may consider providing is a parenting program or classes. Two self-sufficiency programs that were implemented in the late 1980s and early 1990s—The New Chance and Teenage Parent Demonstration experiments—provide some insights about the potential efficacy of parenting interventions within broader self-sufficiency programs.

New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration had few positive effects on the parenting skills and behaviors of teen mothers; in fact, in some cases parenting was negatively affected. A review of the literature indicates that the following ingredients are essential to successful parenting programs:

- Parent education through frequent home visits or "hands on" sessions in another location.
- Interventions that begin before or soon after birth.
- Interventions that last at least 1 year.

Since neither New Chance nor the Teenage Parent Demonstration met these conditions, it is not surprising that these programs had no direct beneficial effects on parenting.

The findings from New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration have important implications for the design of parenting interventions within welfare-to-work programs:

- Welfare reform provides opportunities to identify and provide necessary services to parents in high-risk families, but interventions aimed at improving parenting outcomes for teenage mothers must be much more intensive than those implemented in the New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration programs. The key ingredients of successful programs should be considered required minimums for interventions designed to improve parenting skills and behaviors.
- Attrition or non-participation by clients is a widespread implementation problem that parenting and other programs need to better address. Much more needs to be learned about how to engage disadvantaged families (besides sanctions) if such programs are to meet with success.
- While the effects of self-sufficiency programs may take longer than three to four years to become apparent, parenting outcomes along the way should be monitored closely, since three to four years can make a tremendous difference in a child's life.

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Social Policy Report

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From the Editor

This is the first *SPR* on welfare to work programs and their potential influence on parenting and child well-being. We plan to publish a series of reports on this topic, as the results from innovative state demonstration programs become available. The first report of the series, written by Nancy Reichman and Sara McLanahan, reviews two demonstration programs conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s that were in a sense, prototypes for the programs of the late 1990s. The Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD), which was conducted in three cities and run by Mathematica Policy Research, required ALL teenage mothers enrolled in the welfare system to be assigned to one of two groups—the first received case management as well as sanctions (welfare check reduced) if they did not participate in the self-sufficiency activities as mandated and the second received the regular services (including the self-sufficiency requirement but with no sanction). The TPD was innovative in its use of sanctions (which were included as part of the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996 for the entire nation). And, unlike the current welfare system, the TPD offered case management and parenting classes to help mothers move towards employment. The New Chance Demonstration (NC), which was conducted in 10 states and run by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, also targeted young mothers, but was not tied to the welfare system (i.e., all mothers in the welfare system were not required to participate). The services included more than education and training (as would be offered through the welfare system)—mothers could receive child care, parenting classes, and classes on health, decision-making skills and family planning.

These two welfare to work demonstrations were the first to measure parenting practices using observation and videotaped mother-child interactions. Innovative collaborations were forged between the two survey firms and developmental psychologists from Columbia, Harvard and Minnesota. Brief reports from these collaborations are presented here, one by Marty Zaslow and her colleagues and one by Ellen Kisker, Anu Rangarajan, and Kimberly Boller. In addition, I have included a brief essay on the findings from the early childhood education literature that are relevant to the services offered in TPD and NC. Lonnie Sherrod and I believe that the lessons learned from the early education demonstrations need to be applied to welfare-to-work programs if we expect the latter to support parenting and child development.

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Self-Sufficiency Programs and Parenting Interventions: Lessons from New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration

Nancy E. Reichman and Sara S. McLanahan
Princeton University

Introduction

Work requirements and time limits for welfare recipients, which are being implemented on a large scale as a result of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, will no doubt have repercussions for poor mothers and their children. For example, requiring poor, uneducated, single mothers to enter the workforce may increase maternal stress, depression, guilt, and anxiety, and result in more irritable, less organized, less consistent, less warm, or more demanding parenting (Wilson, Ellwood, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). Such parenting has been associated with adverse cognitive and behavioral child outcomes (Aber, Brooks-Gunn, & Maynard, 1995). On the other hand, for some poor mothers, employment outside the home can have positive effects that may translate into improved parenting (Gyamfi, Brooks-Gunn, & Jackson, in press). Greater self-sufficiency may raise a mother's self-esteem or provide more structure, causing her to engage in positive parenting behaviors. Ultimately, the outcome for individual families will depend on complex interactions of factors, such as the ways in which government interventions are implemented, the strength of the economy, and mothers' own characteristics. That is, some families will benefit while others will not (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1998, 2000).

Devolution has given states discretion over how they design welfare programs, and many states have responded by providing a variety of supplemental supports to poor single mothers, such as childcare, health care, and wage subsidies. States also may consider providing interventions such as parenting programs or classes. Given the increase in maternal stress that may go along with greater labor force participation of poor single mothers, and given that some parenting programs have been shown to enhance parenting and improve child outcomes (Olds & Kitzman, 1993; Gomby, Culcross, & Behrman, 1999; Brooks-Gunn, Berlin, & Fuligni, 2000), providing such programs for mothers making the transition from welfare to work would appear to be a good idea.

None of the programs currently being evaluated as part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS), formerly the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program evaluation, contains a component that is designed to improve parenting skills and behaviors directly, and thus the NEWWS evaluations will not shed any light on the efficacy of such interventions.[1] However, two programs that were implemented in the late 1980s and early 1990s—The New Chance and Teenage Parent Demonstration experiments—do provide some insights into this issue. While these two programs, like most welfare-to-work programs, were designed primarily to increase young mothers' employment and earnings and to reduce their dependence on welfare, they also contained direct interventions designed to improve parenting skills and behaviors. (For a broad overview of the impacts of these two programs on employment, earnings, education, fertility, child wellbeing, and other measures, see Granger & Cytron, 1999.)

This report examines the effects of the New Chance and Teenage Parent Demonstration programs on parenting outcomes, and discusses the implications of these findings for the design of self-sufficiency programs today. These two programs are of particular interest because they targeted teenage mothers (who comprise only about 8% of the welfare caseload, but historically have been the group with the longest-term welfare dependence), included explicit parenting interventions, measured parenting outcomes, and used randomized experimental designs to facilitate evaluation. The following section discusses the programs in brief and describes the parenting interventions and outcomes associated with each. The next section places the results from New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration in the context of the larger literature on experiments designed to improve parenting. The last section highlights the implications of this analysis for states considering the addition of a parenting component to their welfare-to-work programs.

New Chance

New Chance was a national program that provided comprehensive services to families headed by young women who had become mothers as teenagers, had dropped out of high school, and were receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The program operated at 16 sites in 10 states from 1989 to 1995 and served mothers age 16-22 at intake. This multifaceted intervention, which was designed to address the multiple needs of a very high-risk group, provided education and training, free childcare that was both reliable and convenient, access to health care, health and family planning classes, parenting workshops, and courses teaching communication and decision-making skills.

Participants, who signed up voluntarily, were assigned randomly to either an experimental group receiving the extra services in addition to their AFDC benefits, or to a control group, which continued to receive AFDC as before

without any added services. Over 2000 mothers participated in the experiment; approximately 3/4 of these mothers were in the experimental group and the rest were in the control group. The program model, demonstration, and evaluation were developed and conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. (For more detailed information about the New Chance program components, see Quint, Bos, & Polit, 1997.) Since the program included parenting interventions within its broad array of services and also measured parenting outcomes, its evaluation can provide information about the potential success of such interventions within the context of welfare-to-work programs.

The New Chance parenting intervention consisted of weekly parenting and life-skills classes, each lasting approximately two hours. The classes were integrated with other program components, such as writing instruction: for example, writing assignments would cover topics in child health or development. The parenting workshops taught the mothers about child development and effective methods of discipline, and also provided support and encouragement in dealing with the stresses of parenthood. The aim was to promote healthy mother-child relationships and better home environments for the children. The life-skills classes emphasized general skills that also make for better parenting: decision-making strategies, communication skills, and adult "survival skills" such as budgeting and awareness of legal rights and responsibilities. The delivery of the parenting and life-skills workshops varied by site: in some cases, they were provided through the childcare component, and in others they were delivered separately.

Parenting outcomes were measured by evaluating the quality of the home environment, cognitive stimulation for the child, emotional support, physical environment, discipline, and parenting stress. The quality of the home environment was measured with age-appropriate condensed versions of the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) scale, which relies on maternal reports supplemented with interviewer observations. Cognitive stimulation, emotional support, physical environment, and discipline were each rated separately and were also combined into an overall score of home quality. The cognitive stimulation subscale included measures of the availability of books and toys as well as the amount of time that the children engaged in cognitively stimulating activities, such as having stories read to them. The measures of emotional support involved the quality of the mother's interaction with the child. Physical environment was rated with measures characterizing the cleanliness, safety, and pleasantness of the home. Discipline was categorized by the methods the mother used to control the child's behavior.

In addition to the HOME assessment, the evaluation also included a Parenting Stress Scale that uses maternal self-reports to measure the degree of stress or discomfort the mother experiences in her role as a parent, particularly vis-à-vis the focal child. This instrument included subscales measuring the mother's attitude toward both the child and her role as a parent. (See Quint et al., 1997 for more details about these parenting measures.)

The overall evaluation of New Chance indicated that the program increased mothers' stress and aggravation with their children and had little, if any, favorable impact on parenting at 42 months. In particular, women who had high symptom scores for depression at the beginning of the program showed significant increases in maternal stress levels. Women with low depression symptom scores at baseline, however, showed little, if any, impact on their levels of stress—in these cases, the program even appeared to improve the home environment. These findings have implications for the screening and targeting of self-sufficiency programs aimed at teenage mothers in that mothers with high depression symptom scores may need different types of interventions than mothers with lower scores (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, & McCormick, in press).

The Teenage Parent Demonstration

The Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD) operated from mid-1987 to mid-1991 and consisted of two different programs—Project Advance, which operated on Chicago's South Side, and Teen Progress, which operated at two sites in New Jersey (Newark and Camden). These programs were aimed at teenage mothers giving birth *and* receiving AFDC for the first time. Approximately 90 percent of almost 6,000 eligible mothers were enrolled in the demonstration and were assigned randomly into either a regular-services group that continued to receive routine AFDC services, or an enhanced-services group that was *required* to participate in educational or employment-related activities while receiving case management services, assistance with both childcare and transportation, and other services in addition to their AFDC grants. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded funds to public welfare agencies in Illinois and New Jersey to design and implement these demonstration programs, and then contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. to conduct a series of evaluations. (For more information about the Teenage Parent Demonstration and its evaluation, see Kisker, Rangarajan, & Boller, 1998.) The mothers in the experimental group who did not comply with program rules were penalized by having their AFDC grants reduced. The vast majority of the participants were between 17 and 19 years old at intake. Over 1/3 of the mothers were sanctioned at some point for failing to adhere to program requirements. The sanctions consisted of reductions in monthly AFDC grants by the amount that covered the mother herself (ap-

The Teenage Parent Demonstration:
Long Term Impacts on Parents and Children

Ellen Eliason Kisker, Anu Rangarajan, and Kimberly Boller
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

This overview draws heavily on the Executive Summary of the following report: Kisker, E. E., Rangarajan, A., & Boller, K. (1998). Moving into adulthood: Were the impacts of mandatory programs for welfare-dependent teenage parents sustained after the programs ended? Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

While the Teenage Parent Demonstration programs in Chicago, Illinois and Newark and Camden, New Jersey were operating, they increased significantly the school attendance, job training, employment, and childcare use of teenage parents going on welfare for the first time with their first child (Maynard, Nicholson, and Rangarajan, 1993). To learn whether these promising early impacts were sustained, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. to conduct a longer-term follow-up of the parents and children (three to four years after the programs ended).

Approximately six and a half years after program intake (when most of the children were between 6 and 8 years old), demonstration sample members completed a parent interview and if eligible, participated in an in-home assessment of their child's development. Approximately 85 percent of sample members completed the parent interview. Of the 2,680 families eligible for the child assessment, 2,096 (78 percent) completed both the interview and the assessment. Consistent with the experimental design of the evaluation, about half of the long-term follow-up sample members were in the enhanced-services group (they were eligible for the demonstration case management services and parenting seminars and were subject to grant reductions if they received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and were not in school, training, or working). Half of the sample members were in the regular-services group (they were subject to the usual AFDC program requirements).

The parent interview included parent-report measures of the child's health, progress in school, and social and emotional wellbeing, as well as measures of the home and neighborhood environments, and maternal wellbeing. Parents were also asked about their education, employment, welfare receipt, and childcare use. The child assessments included standardized tests of vocabulary, reading, and math and the child's report of how he/she was doing in school.

Key findings include:

- **The early impacts on employment-related activities and welfare receipt were not sustained once the demonstration programs ended and participants returned to the old program rules.** The demonstration programs' early impacts began to dissipate at about the same time the sanctions and support services ended for those in the enhanced-services group. Over time, the regular-services group members caught up with the enhanced-services group members.
- **When they were in elementary school, the first-born children of the teenage mothers performed poorly, compared with children nationally, on several measures of development and wellbeing.** The children in the sample received substantially lower scores than children nationally on a test of receptive vocabulary and scored higher on a measure of behavior problems.
- **Requiring teenage mothers to participate in educational and employment-related activities, and increasing their use of childcare when their children were very young, had neither harmful nor beneficial effects on their children's long-term development.** There were no significant differences between the regular- and enhanced-services groups in children's cognitive and social-emotional wellbeing and physical health when the children were in early elementary school, except in Newark, where some small differences in outcomes were statistically significant but in developmental terms, not very meaningful.

Reference

Maynard, R., Nicholson, W., & Rangarajan, A. (1993). *Breaking the cycle of poverty: The effectiveness of mandatory services for welfare-dependent teenage parents.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.

proximately $160) until she complied with the program requirements.

As part of the program, young mothers were required to attend workshops designed to improve their personal skills and help them manage their roles as parents. The content of the parenting workshops varied somewhat by site. The workshops in Chicago included discussions about good parenting and presented information on the stages of child development, health and nutrition, and child support. The workshops in Newark covered issues related to child development, parenting and coping techniques, community resources for parents, and the relationship between the mother and her parents and/or the child's father. In Camden, the workshops involved discussions of problems often encountered by parents as well as potential solutions to these problems, and covered topics such as child and adult development, stress management, health and nutrition practices, and child support. Other than these workshops, the programs did not intervene to improve parenting skills and practices.

The quantity of services varied tremendously by site. Mothers in Chicago spent an average of 1 * hours—total—attending parenting workshops, whereas mothers in Newark spent an average of 20 hours in such workshops and those in Camden were referred selectively, at the discretion of program personnel, into workshops providing 21 hours of services.

Several instruments were used to assess the quality of the home environment, the quantity and quality of hands-on activities of the mother with her oldest child, and the regulation of the oldest child's television viewing. The Family Environment Scale measures maternal perceptions of family solidarity and attachment. The Verbal Aggression and Violence Subscales of the Conflict Tactics Scale reflect maternal reports of the frequency of violent or verbally aggressive incidents. Maternal reports on the extent to which mother and child practiced academic skills together and played organized games together, as well as how much mothers read aloud to their children, were involved in school or religious activities, and served as role models by reading books or newspapers in front of their children, were used to assess both the quality of mother-child interaction and the degree of exposure to maternally-induced cognitively stimulating activities. Maternal reports of the number of hours the television was on in the home and the number of hours the oldest child watched television per day were also collected to assess the degree of maternal regulation of the child's access to television (see Kisker et al., 1998 for more details about the parenting measures).

The long-term evaluation after 78 months (Kisker et al., 1998) indicates that the program had very little effect on parenting outcomes. It did have some *negative* effects on the home environment, particularly in Newark, but had almost no effects on parenting activities per se. There were no clear patterns by site, even though services in the three sites varied a great deal.

Putting the Two Experiments in Context

Are the disappointing results on parenting of these two experiments consistent with what the literature would predict, or are they aberrations? To answer this question, we first examine the existing literature on parenting interventions; then, we compare the interventions and results of New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration to those of other, more successful parenting programs.

We reviewed the literature on parenting-intervention programs that targeted parents of children age 0-3, had explicit parenting interventions, measured parenting outcomes, and used randomized experimental designs to facilitate evaluation. The focus on parents of very young children is based on recent findings about the importance of early childhood experiences for later development. According to Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, and Maritato (1997): "Humans' first three years comprise a longer period of immaturity and dependence than is experienced by any other species. At the same time, this period is characterized by rapid and dramatic physical and mental developments. These developments, in turn, are increasingly being viewed as the building blocks of adult cognitive and emotional functioning" (p.1). The importance of developing good parenting skills may be even more pronounced when the parents are teenagers (Brooks-Gunn & Chase-Lansdale, 1995; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). For an overview of parenting programs that target teenage parents, a review by Olds and Kitzman (1993) of experimental studies evaluating the effectiveness of home-visiting programs is particularly useful (see also Gomby et al., 1999). Other resources addressing the effectiveness of parenting programs include St. Pierre and Layzer (1999), Yoshikawa (1995), Benasich, Brooks-Gunn, and Clewell (1992), Brooks-Gunn et al. (1997), Duggan et al. (1999), Kitzman et al. (1997), Karoly et al. (1998), Luster, Perlstadt, McKinney, Sims, and Juang (1996), Olds et al. (1997), Olds et al. (1999), and Brooks-Gunn et al. (2000).

Several themes emerge from this literature. Most successful parenting programs, defined as those with net favorable findings on the outcomes they were designed to improve, targeted low-income mothers, a group at high risk for both poor parenting and adverse child outcomes. Many of the programs targeted teen mothers directly, or did so indirectly by targeting first-time and/or low income and minority mothers. Most provided "hands-on" parenting education (often through home visits) and some reported favorable gains in mother/infant interaction, as well as enhanced parental cognitive stimulation. The literature also indicates that most

Overview of the New Chance Observational Study

Martha Zaslow
Child Trends

The New Chance Observation Study was embedded within the experimental evaluation of the New Chance program, which included 2,322 families in 16 sites. The Observational Study was conducted by Child Trends and MDRC in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Minnesota, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Mathematica Policy Research (see Zaslow & Eldred, 1998). Each participating family had a child between 30 and 60 months of age; 290 children from 7 sites were included, 184 from the New Chance program group and 106 from the control group. The families in the Observational Study had an extra home visit about 21 months after random assignment. Child outcome measures were collected about 42 months after random assignment (the time at which all 2,322 families were assessed).

The study combined four types of parenting measures: (1) direct observations of mother-child interactions in the context of a series of teaching tasks (providing a view of the way in which the mother provided guidance and support in a challenging situation and the way in which the child responded in this context); (2) measure of the structuring of the home environment (the HOME-Short Form), for a view of the structuring of the home environment and of interactions over a longer period of time and in the course of everyday events; (3) mothers' subjective reactions to parenting (e.g. aggravation and stress in the parenting role); and (4) time use on a recent weekday.

Key findings from the New Chance Observational Study may be summarized as follows:

- **On average, mothers in the New Chance Observational Study sample were at particularly high risk in terms of parenting behavior.**
- At the same time, despite their similar economic circumstances, **the mothers in the New Chance Observational Study showed variation in their parenting behaviors**; and this variation was meaningfully related to background characteristics. Thus, there is heterogeneity in parenting behavior within a sample that has limited variation in terms of economic status.
- **The New Chance Program was able to bring about positive changes in parenting behavior, although the magnitude of the impacts was generally modest.** Even in a sample of families burdened by economic stress and other serious difficulties, positive program impacts were found both in terms of the emotional quality of interaction and in terms of cognitive stimulation provided by the mother. Effect sizes ranged from .23 to .50.
- **Positive program impacts were found across parenting measures obtained in several different ways and from different informants.** In the teaching tasks, mothers in the program group were observed to engage in fewer harsh interactions with their children and they received a higher rating on the measure of Book Reading Quality. On the measures of the home environment, families in the program group received higher total scores on the HOME-Short Form, and higher scores specifically on the measure of Emotional Support in the home environment. In terms of subjective reactions to parenting, mothers in the program group perceived greater warmth in the relationship with their children. Finally, mothers in the program group reported spending more time in parenting tasks based on time use on a recent weekday.
- **The modest improvements in parenting behavior did not suffice to bring about positive program impacts on child outcomes.** Indeed, there were unexpected unfavorable program impacts on child outcome measures, especially in terms of the children's social behavior.

The findings of this study suggest that it may be necessary not only to address parent-child relations, but also the context of parenting (such as mothers' psychological wellbeing and residential stability), in order to bring about positive changes in the development of children in families of young mothers in poverty. A more intensive or sustained parenting education program may also be needed in order to bring about positive impacts on children in this particularly high risk group.

Reference

Zaslow, M., & Eldred, C. (Eds.). (1998). *Parenting behavior in a sample of young mothers in poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study.* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

parenting interventions have uneven impacts across subgroups and sites, but as yet there are no clear patterns revealing the subgroups and locations most likely to benefit.

Overall, it appears that the most successful parenting interventions involve parent education through frequent home visits (at least one every two weeks) or, at a minimum, "hands-on" parent education beginning before or immediately after birth and lasting six months or more. Since neither New Chance nor the Teenage Parent Demonstration included such interventions, it is not surprising that these programs had no direct beneficial effects on parenting.

The New Chance program was designed to include classes in parenting and life skills, each for 2 hours per week. In fact, however, approximately one third of mothers in the experimental group never attended any New Chance parenting classes (Zaslow, 1998), and the actual services received by the other two thirds fell far short of even the modest goal of four hours per week. One of the reasons for this was the high rate of attrition: while the program was designed to run for 18 months, participants, on average, remained in it for only 6.4 months. By nine months, 56% had left (Gomby et al., 1999). Moreover, there was high absenteeism among participants, many of whom reported that they did not need parenting classes. Such difficulty in gaining the cooperation of high-risk mothers is a common implementation problem that plagues many programs, including home visiting interventions (Gomby et al., 1999).

The delivery of these workshops varied considerably by site. In some cases, parenting education was delivered through the site's childcare component; in others, workshops were conducted at another location. The site profiles contained in the report on New Chance (Quint et al., 1997) do not uniformly report the type of delivery system or the intensity of the interventions at the different locations. Nevertheless, it appears that the sites that had especially high rates of absenteeism and attrition also had negative parenting effects.

Thus, in contrast to most successful programs that focus on parenting exclusively, New Chance had parenting interventions that appeared to be too low in intensity, too short-term, and not conducted in the best setting to sustain improved parenting practices through the 42-month follow-up. Additionally, although their average age at baseline was 18 months, many of the children in New Chance were beyond the 0-3 age range at the beginning of the program. Finally, the common problem of retaining high-risk mothers always makes it difficult to detect possible treatment effects.

While it seems that the home is the most effective setting for parenting interventions, it is possible that delivery of interventions through the childcare component rather than as a separate service outside of the home might have resulted in better parenting outcomes in the New Chance program: like the home, the childcare setting may foster parent/child interaction more effectively than a classroom setting where the child is absent. If nothing else, the attendance and attrition problems might have been lessened. While these factors are difficult to evaluate retrospectively since they were not part of the experimental design, further analysis of this issue within New Chance could shed some light on the relationship between delivery modes and the outcomes associated with parenting interventions.

The parenting interventions of the Teenage Parent Demonstration varied considerably across its three sites. Mothers in Chicago attended workshops for an average of only 1* hours total, while mothers at the other sites received approximately 20 hours of such services. These workshops were generally led by different people for different topics. The sessions were neither home-based nor integrated with childcare. Again, based on the literature describing more successful parenting experiments, the TPD parenting interventions were too brief, too unfocused, and of insufficient intensity to expect favorable direct effects on parenting. The results, therefore, were largely unsurprising. Moreover, the program as a whole produced some modest negative effects on parenting outcomes in Newark, where children in the experimental group ended up with slightly lower-quality home environments and had mothers who were somewhat less responsive to their needs and less accepting than those in the control group.

It is not surprising that New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration had little if any positive effect on parenting outcomes, since parenting was not the main focus and they contained very few of the ingredients that make for successful interventions in this area. Both programs had positive effects on GED completion, but there was no evidence that this positive education effect improved parenting. The programs had little if any effect on earnings, marriage and cohabitation (except for the Teenage Parent Demonstration site in Newark, where the experimental group had significantly lower rates of marriage and cohabitation than the control group), and no effects on fertility and unemployment, so it is unlikely that any of these factors affected parenting outcomes.

The New Chance mothers did experience greater residential instability, and their children spent more time in day care centers at early ages than their control group counterparts; these factors may have played roles in the disappointing parenting outcomes. New Chance mothers also experienced higher levels of parenting stress than the control group mothers, and they tended to report on their children's behavior more negatively than the children's teachers did. Taken together, these findings present a picture of young mothers who faced a high level of stress in order to make an investment in their future (getting a GED

What Are the Components of Successful Early Childhood Programs?

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The two demonstrations highlighted in this *Social Policy Report* offered services to poor young mothers that went beyond the typical welfare-to-work job, education, and skill training. The program developers knew that young mothers need help to juggle parenting and work. Classes were provided to enhance knowledge about children's health and development; and childcare was available at some of the NC sites. Additionally, referrals for childcare were made (although little information exists as to how often such advice was given and whether mothers used it). Given these efforts, why were so few effects of TPD and NC seen on parenting or child well being? Are the lessons from early childhood education relevant, given recent findings especially from programs serving children in the first three years of life? I believe they are, for the following reasons.

Early childhood programs focused on enhancing parenting behavior have been successful in some but not all cases. In general, virtually no positive effects have been seen from the provision of parenting classes, in the absence of other program components. Yet, home visiting programs have increased responsive parenting and decreased harsh parenting when the following conditions are met — visits are made at least two or three times a month; visits last for over a year (ideally, for several years); the home visitors have extensive training; the home visitors have a low turn-over rate (so that families are not trying to acclimate to a new visitor); and the program has clearly specified goals. Finally, center-based care programs have influenced parenting practices. However, it is not clear whether these would occur in the absence of frequent interaction with program staff (i.e. would a center-based program influence parenting if interaction with staff did not occur daily during drop-off and pick-up, or if home visits were not part of the overall program package?).

Early childhood programs that have concentrated on child outcomes have been beneficial, but not under all conditions. Again, programs that provide services in terms of parenting classes or drop-in centers for childcare have not enhanced child well being. Most home visiting programs have not altered children's trajectories either (especially in the short-term). In contrast, high quality early education programs do influence children, with short-term effects often being large (one-half to a full standard deviation). These effects are found when children attend the center daily for several years.

Most of the early childhood settings shown to be effective involve frequent, sustained, continuous contact with highly trained staff. These conditions were not part of the two welfare-to-work demonstration's packages of program components. I do not mean to criticize these programs; (Indeed, I have been involved in one of them.) Instead, it seems that we might be asking too much of programs whose primary goal is moving mothers into the work force rather than providing mothers with parenting and childcare services. The cost of providing the latter type of services is considerable, and early childhood services will not be effective unless attention is paid to quality of services, training of providers, intensity of services, and the relationship between provider and parent.

and using center-based day care for their children at earlier ages), only to confront disappointing results (poor earnings and employment). This situation could have led to poorer parenting outcomes than would otherwise have been the case.

The Teenage Parent Demonstration's negative effects on parenting were concentrated in Newark. In contrast to New Chance, however, the "Newark effects" do not appear to be linked to the children's age, childcare, or maternal stress. The program covered children well within the 0-3 age range. While program participation led mothers in Camden to place their oldest children in childcare at significantly younger ages than they would have otherwise, in Newark there were very few program effects on childcare. In fact, mothers in the Newark enhanced-services group were significantly *less* likely than the control mothers to have used any childcare during the past year, and used fewer hours of childcare per week. In Chicago, no effects on childcare were noted. Other factors that might have contributed to the poorer parenting outcomes in Newark seem not to have played any role: the Newark mothers who received enhanced services were significantly less likely at follow-up than mothers receiving regular services to be at risk for depression, and they re-

ported a significantly lower number of difficult life experiences and were less likely to report work or activity limitations due to physical problems.

Newark, however, was the only site in either of the programs in which program participation was associated with decreased rates of marriage and cohabitation. Thus, theories stressing the importance of the mother-father relationship as a major factor determining the mother-child relationship (Cox & Paley, 1997; Cox & Brooks-Gunn, 1999) may prove significant in explaining the negative parenting outcomes in Newark. To understand these effects, however, more information is needed on both program content and implementation there. Was Newark more difficult than the other two sites, or did it differ from them in other important ways?

We already have seen that given the broader context, it is not surprising that New Chance and the TPD had weak effects on parenting at best. It is important to note, however, that only program benefits, and not costs, have been considered here. A practical yet critical question that cannot be tested from these evaluations is whether or not the services provided by programs are *cost-efficient*. It is possible that programs that have very low expenditures *and* very low returns on parenting interventions, are in fact more cost-efficient than some of the larger-scale programs requiring more intensive interventions and thus higher costs, but producing only modest returns. It is clear, however, that programs resulting in *negative* or no returns cannot be considered cost-efficient relative to other interventions, or to no intervention at all. A related and important philosophical issue that policy makers are bound to confront is how to proceed when a program is cost-efficient in terms of mothers' employment, earnings, and welfare receipt, but detrimental in terms of parenting and/or child outcomes.

Finally, it is important to note that the information on parenting in the New Chance and Teenage Parent Demonstration data is based almost entirely on the mothers' self-reports concerning stress and the home environment. Generally, early childhood intervention evaluations report greater treatment effects on parenting when mother-child interaction is observed by a third party—or even coded via video tape, as is often the case—than when interview or questionnaire data are used (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2000, Benasich et al., 1992, Berlin, Brooks-Gunn, Spiker, & Zaslow, 1995). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the method of measuring outcomes could have affected the findings on parenting reported in the long-term impact evaluations of these two early self-sufficiency programs. Indeed, observational sub-sample studies (using videotapes) on parenting were conducted for both programs, by Zaslow (1998) within New Chance and by Aber et al. (1995) for the Newark site of the TPD. Both studies found that mothers in the experimental groups engaged in less harsh parenting than those in the control groups, suggesting that if these programs did have positive parenting effects, these were in the realm of controlling and negative parenting behaviors.

Implications for Welfare Reform

The findings from New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration have important implications for welfare reform. One general lesson is that steps on the road to self-sufficiency (schooling, work, earnings) may come at a price (parental stress). The new welfare reform provides opportunities to identify and provide necessary services to parents in high-risk families, but it is clear that interventions aimed at improving parenting outcomes for teenage mothers must be much more intensive than those incorporated into the two particular programs we have examined here.

The effectiveness of a program depends on both its design and content, and the extent of client participation (the treatment of "the treated"). Our review of the relevant literature suggests that the following ingredients are probably essential to successful parenting programs: (1) parent education through frequent home visits (at least once every two weeks) or "hands-on" sessions at another location, (2) interventions that begin before or immediately after birth, and (3) interventions that last at least 1 year. Such programs will undoubtedly be much more expensive than the smaller-scale parenting interventions offered by New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration programs, but unlike these, they have had proven success.

States thinking of incorporating parenting components into their welfare-to-work programs should be prepared to invest in intensive interventions that are known to work and evaluations that will accurately assess program impacts on parenting outcomes (e.g., randomized experimental designs of different treatment intensities and perhaps third-party observations of parent-child interactions). The three key ingredients of successful programs listed above should be considered *required minimums* for interventions designed to improve parenting skills and behaviors. It is important to note, however, that the implementation of programs involving home visits may become more difficult as mothers become required to participate in the labor market and have less time for home visits.

Attrition or non-participation by clients is a widespread implementation problem that parenting and self-sufficiency programs in general need to better address. It is clear from LEAP (Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program) and other programs that financial sanctions alone do not guarantee sustained participation. Thus, much more needs to be learned about how to engage disadvantaged families if such programs are to meet with success (see Berlin, O'Neal, and Brooks-Gunn, 1998).

As mentioned by Quint et al. (1997), interventions should proceed with caution when counseling young disadvantaged mothers about living arrangements. New Chance mothers were actively encouraged to move out on their own to get away from (presumably) abusive or conflict-ridden living situations. The evaluation indicates that the program did increase residential instability, which is one likely cause of the increased maternal stress noted in the study results; this, in turn, may have resulted in mothers' more negative appraisals of their children's behavior (Gordon, Chase-Lansdale, Matjasko, & Brooks-Gunn, 1997) or possibly their extent of participation in the program. In general, it is important to consider the entire range of consequences when intervening to change the living arrangements of young mothers.

It is clear that no simple fix exists for the problem of welfare dependence. Self-sufficiency is a complex phenomenon that even major programs such as New Chance and the Teenage Parent Demonstration were not able to address fully. However, it should be recognized that while the effects of any program may take longer than three to four years to become apparent, shorter-term parenting outcomes along the long road to self-sufficiency should be tracked, since three or four years can make a tremendous difference in a child's life.

One last note: With the state waivers prior to 1996 and the passage of the new welfare reform legislation in 1996, the context of welfare policy has changed dramatically in the last decade. Parents now face much stricter requirements than they did when the two programs discussed here were implemented in the late 1980s. Work requirements and time limits are now much more broadly applied, and welfare caseloads have decreased 50% since their peak in 1994. There is some suggestion that the first parents to leave the rolls since 1996 comprise a select cohort—those best able to make it on their own, leaving a group of more vulnerable parents behind. For example, in a recent study, Gyamfi et al. (in press) followed a small sample of women in New York City who, between 1996 and 1998, had been on welfare for several years; they found that those who went off welfare shortly after the reforms had lower levels of stress and depression than the women who continued on welfare. It is possible that outcomes may be much less positive for women who remain on welfare until they hit their time limits than for those who are able to become self-sufficient sooner. Also, it is unknown whether the effects of interventions will be stronger or weaker for this disadvantaged group than for the overall population of welfare recipients. It is important to take these dynamics and issues into account when evaluating the effects of the new welfare reform, as it unfolds, on parenting and other outcomes.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

[1] Nor will other recent experiments/evaluations that do not include parenting components, such as the Minnesota Family Investment Program, the New Hope Project, Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project, and Florida's Family Transition Program.

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Social Policy Report

Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away

Volume XV, Number 3 2001

Strategic Frame Analysis: Reframing America's Youth

Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. and Susan Nall Bales

Summary

The way youth issues are framed for public consideration has severe consequences for youth policy advocates. How the public thinks about social and political issues, and what policy solutions they regard as appropriate and compelling, are largely determined by the way these issues are framed in the media and public discourse.

Applied to issues affecting children and youth, the way news is framed – through visuals, symbols, inference, and language — can trigger either pictures of self-absorbed, potentially violent, amoral teenagers or inexperienced junior adults experimenting with identity in order to assume their role in the community. That act of framing, in turn, can predispose voters to prioritize the allocation of public resources in different ways. For example, voters may choose prisons over education or volunteer programs.

Social cognition theory tells us that limits on human capacity require people to rely on mental "shortcuts" to make sense out of their world (Hastie, 1986; Taylor & Crocker, 1981; Sherman, Judd, & Park, 1989; Wyer & Srull, 1984). Organizing knowledge into general categories is an efficient way for people to make inferences and judgments about specific instances in their current environment. Furthermore, the content or nature of the incoming information determines which mental representations are called upon in the decision making process (Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Conover & Feldman, 1989; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986; Morgan & Schwalbe, 1990; Tannen, 1993). In other words, how the issue is *framed* is crucial to public reasoning.

Most Americans now rely on news reports to learn about public issues (Papper & Gerhard, 1997; Roper Starch, 1994). Increasingly, the real world for most Americans is viewed through the lens of the news media. It is this theory of mass media's pervasive influence in concealing and prioritizing public options upon which strategic frame analysis rests.

Strategic frame analysis, the method advanced in this paper, allows a nuanced understanding of the role played by media and public opinion in impeding or advancing the goals of those who seek more public attention and resources allocated to youth. Strategic frame analysis relies on a series of methods adapted from traditional opinion research, media studies and cultural and cognitive fieldwork including survey research, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, media content analysis, metaphor analysis, and media effects tests. This paper applies the basic principles of strategic frame analysis to discern what Americans think about youth (especially teenagers), why they think what they do, what consequences this has for youth policy and policy advocates, and how policy advocates might best engage Americans in a discussion about positive youth development.

Among the findings:

Adults believe that teens today are "different" than they were in the past. "...only 16% of Americans say that 'young people under the age of 30 share most of their moral and ethical values." (Bostrom, 2000a)

Confronted with what was presented as a "true news story" about recent trends among teenagers, adults consistently overlooked the positive data (which dominated the story) and focused instead on the few negative trends.

In an analysis of television news conducted for the authors, the Center for Media and Public Affairs found a paucity of news reporting about youth — only one out of every 12 stories on local newscasts, and only one out of every 25 stories on network news dealt with young people. The three most frequently reported topics of youth news on the local stations were crime victimization, accidents involving young people, and violent juvenile crime, accounting for nearly half (46%) of all coverage of youth.

While research suggests that "parents of teenagers or those who interact regularly with teenagers are much less susceptible to media portrayals of teens" (Aubrun & Grady, 2000), nevertheless most Americans "tend to resolve this contradiction by judging their own experience to be exceptional, rather than by challenging the media frames...The position of the media has the effect of making their own experience and attitudes seem unusual or even aberrant. They tend to discount what does not fit the media frame as exceptional, rather than questioning or challenging the frame."

The researchers did find a number of instances in which adults described youth in positive terms, often using values associated with work (e.g., discipline and commitment). These activities include: group sports, performing arts, and volunteer/community service.

The authors conclude that the challenge in testing the power of these incipient reframes to overcome the dominant stereotypes of troubled, at-risk youth will be the connection to community responsibility. In virtually every aspect of the research to date, the ability to connect youth outcomes to community programs and public policies proved an insurmountable obstacle for adults. Building responsibility into the frame, beyond youth themselves and their parents, remains a major undertaking.

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Social Policy Report

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From the Editor

The media is an increasingly present force in our lives. Research by numerous SRCD members has already demonstrated the powerful influence of television on children's development. Such influence can be both positive and negative. The new technologies from video games to interactive computers increase the range and complexity of such influences.

The research reported in this *Report* describes an additional dimension to the media's influence. Borrowing ideas from *cognitive* science, Gilliam and Bales show how the framing of news stories has dramatic effects on the attitudes viewers form. The way issues are framed through the use of visuals, symbols, inference and language subtly influences the public's views of social issues and the policy solutions they support. Gilliam and Bales demonstrate how the news media are yet another factor competing with research information for impact on public opinion and policy.

Furthermore, these investigators illustrate their use of frame analysis by examining the publics' views of today's youth. The public's view of youth is rather despairing. The proportion of youth engaging in negative behavior is wildly exaggerated, and presenting adults with more positive news stories does not seem to alter views. Clearly, the public's negative perception of youth and the difficulty with which such views can be changed is a policy concern.

Hopefully this issue of *SPR* will serve to increase readers' awareness of framing as one avenue through which the media influence public opinion and of the public's negative views of youth. Both issues are ones for which individual action as well as policy making can have an impact.

Lonnie R. Sherrod, Ph.D., Editor
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Strategic Frame Analysis: Reframing America's Youth[1]

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How does the public come to understand social and political issues? That is, what determines the nature of public thinking? More importantly, how does this dialogue influence public choices? These simple questions are at the heart of an approach we call *strategic frame analysis*. Our primary interest is in how the public reasons about a given issue and the policy consequences of those conceptual decisions. Our core argument is that how issues are *framed* – both in the public mind and the mass media — has a measurable impact on public discourse. By framing, we mean how messages are encoded with meaning so that they can be efficiently interpreted in relationship to existing beliefs or ideas.

This is significant because how people think about issues influences policy outcomes (Lakoff, 1996; Lippman, 1921). Applied to issues affecting children and youth, the way news is framed – through visuals, symbols, inference, and language — can trigger either pictures of self-absorbed, potentially violent, amoral teenagers or inexperienced junior adults experimenting with identity in order to assume their role in the community. That act of framing, in turn, can predispose voters to prioritize the allocation of public resources in different ways. For example, voters may choose prisons over education or volunteer programs. In short, the way youth issues are framed for public consideration has severe consequences for youth policy advocates. Strategic frame analysis, therefore, allows a more nuanced understanding of the role played by media and public opinion in impeding or advancing the goals of those who seek more public attention and resources allocated to youth.

How issues are framed – *both in the public mind and the mass media — has a measurable impact on public discourse.*

Theoretically situated in the social and cognitive sciences, strategic frame analysis seeks to identify dominant *frames* of public understanding taking into account the dynamic role that media plays in creating and activating particular frames, and excluding others. Our approach is strategic in the sense that we empirically test the impact of dominant frames on public reasoning and then develop and test alternative *reframes*. We use the term reframe to mean changing "the context of the message exchange" (Rogers, 1994, p. 98) so that different interpretations and probable outcomes become visible to the public. In this way, we are able to assess the extent to which rival frames produce different decision outcomes. Thus we are positioned both to test competing theoretical arguments and to inform the work of issue advocates.

According to Harold Lasswell (1939) a core research mission of the study of communications is "...to clarify probable significant results." Following this directive, we are neither advocates for the status quo nor for the policy proposals we test. Yet, we do adhere to the belief expressed by Robert S. Lynd (1939) at the dawn of the study of mass communications:

> I am for describing what is, not in terms of itself as a final datum, but within a framework of conceptual orientation to a possible line of action that we as social scientists decide is intelligent. This gives us more precise focus and a projective thrust to our data on what is, because it is oriented to something specific other than merely describing what happens to be before us.

Our work is meant to explore the likelihood of public consensus around those policies that experts in youth development currently deem most promising for supporting the healthy development of American youth.

The objective of this paper is to present the theoretical structure of strategic frame analysis and apply it to the study of youth issues. In the next section, we identify key concepts in the social and cognitive sciences that serve as the theoretical foundation of our approach. We also call special attention to the role of the news media in connecting public understanding to policy results. We then turn to an application of this approach to youth issues. Here we identify the dominant frames of youth as reflected in public opinion and the mass media. From this work, we specify empirical tests to assess their effects on attitudes and policy preferences. The last step is to identify and develop possible reframes that can allow the public to consider and evaluate alternative policy prescriptions. We conclude with a brief discussion of the implications of our approach for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in youth issues.

Strategic Frame Analysis

Social cognition theory tells us that limits on human capacity require people to rely on mental "shortcuts" to make sense out of their world (Hastie 1986; Taylor & Crocker, 1981; Sherman, Judd, & Park, 1989; Wyer & Srull, 1984). Organizing knowledge into general categories is an efficient way for people to make inferences and judgments about specific instances in their current environment. Furthermore, the content or nature of the incoming information determines which mental representations are called upon in the decision making process (Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Conover & Feldman, 1989; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986; Morgan & Schwalbe, 1990; Tannen, 1993). In other words, how the issue is *framed* is crucial to public reasoning.

> *The way news is framed – through visuals, symbols, inference, and language — can trigger either pictures of self-absorbed, potentially violent, amoral teenagers or inexperienced junior adults experimenting with identity.*

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson first used the term "frame" in 1955 to refer to two key aspects of communication. First, frames are cognitive models (such as an understanding of what a "family" is) that allow an audience to interpret and to evaluate a given message. The cognitive models that particularly interest anthropologists are "cultural models," understandings that are shared and durable, and have motivational force. In Bateson's second sense (which was later borrowed by sociologist Erving Goffman), frames are "metacommunications," i.e., messages about messages.

Frames tell an audience how to interpret a message — and even what counts as part of the message and what should be ignored — by evoking particular cognitive models and not others. Referring to government programs as handouts, for example, brings to bear cultural models of laziness, but not of suffering. In a recent Florida lawsuit against the tobacco industry, jurors reported their final ruling was based not "on whether people had the choice to smoke or not to smoke," as they had originally thought, but rather on the fact "that the companies knew they were selling a defective product." (Bragg & Kershaw, 2000, p. 1) Had "choice" predominated as the frame, jurors admitted they would not have levied damages; in moving to the "defective product" frame, they assigned the largest damage award in history (Bragg & Kershaw, 2000).

Both of Bateson's senses of "frame" are key to strategic frame analysis. We use the term frame throughout this paper to refer both to the way meaning is encoded in a particular message, and to the "labels the mind uses to find what it knows" (Schank, 1998, p. 67). Put simply, the frame triggers its own interpretation, allowing us to process information quickly and efficiently, based on past experiences, beliefs and expectations. Schank (1998) describes this dynamic in the following way: "Finding some familiar element causes us to activate the story that is labeled by that familiar element, and we understand the new story as if it were an exemplar of that old element." (p. 59) For purposes of this paper, except where specifically addressed, we will use frame in the broadest sense, incorporating such related concepts as scripts, stories, schema, cultural models, plans, and classifications.

Cognitive linguist George Lakoff (1979) introduces the notion that frames derive from a vast conceptual system whose unit is metaphor. "Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system." (p. 9) The systematicity of this vast conceptual framework allows individuals to understand new information in the context of what they already know to be familiar, and to reject information that does not fit. "Metaphors may create ... social realities for us," according to Lakoff and Johnson (1979, p. 10). A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Indeed, their very purpose is to connect random information to myths, ideologies and stereotypes that allow the individual to process and store the new with the old. In this sense, frames reinforce world-view (Lakoff, 1996) because "the frame strikes a responsive chord in that it rings true with extant beliefs, myths (and) folktales" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 141).

If, as researchers suggest, these frames are durable and instantiated by common usage, how then can we consider new ideas? Social movement theorists observe that advocates must engage in reframing when they wish to introduce a new set of ideas: "new values may have to be planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs or 'misframings' jettisoned" (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986, p. 473). Schank (1998) suggests that reframing is possible only because "we don't understand them as new stories" (p. 58). To reframe, then, is to change the interpretive lens through which new information is processed by reorganizing the encoded elements of the frame. In a study of the Civil Rights Movement, for instance, Allison Calhoun-Brown (2000) asserts that "the culture of the black church helped leaders to frame the meaning of the nonviolent message and encouraged churchgoers to respond to it positively" (p. 168) because Martin Luther King

rooted the story of political action in the religious story of Moses. In this sense, King "reframed" political resistance as a "liberation struggle" as old as that waged against the slavery of Pharaoh's Egypt, strongly rooted in parishioners' "grassroots ideology." In reframing, we seek to identify alternative frames of interpretation, which, although weaker or less common to media, can nevertheless serve the labeling function and foreground different policies or actions.

Although our general interest has to do with the nature and impact of mass media, we call special attention to the important role played by the news media in constructing and maintaining public perceptions about social issues. The reason, of course, concerns the pervasiveness of news programming in the United States. Put differently, much of what the public knows (or think they know) is conveyed by print and broadcast media. We follow this line of reasoning in the following section.

Framing and the News

Most Americans now rely on news reports to learn about public issues (Papper & Gerhard, 1997; Roper Starch, 1994). Increasingly, the real world for most Americans is viewed through the lens of the news media. How the media frames public issues, however, is critical to the final resolution of public problems (Mutz, 1998; Mutz & Soss, 1997). News presentations have been categorized as falling into two types of frames — episodic or thematic. Episodic news frames, the predominant frame on television newscasts, depict public issues in terms of concrete instances. That is, they focus on discrete events that involve individuals located at specific places and at specific times (e.g., nightly crime reports). By contrast, thematic frames place public issues in a broader context by focusing on general conditions or outcomes (e.g., reports on poverty trends in the U.S.). Researchers have shown that the type of news frame used has a profound effect on the way in which individuals attribute responsibility. Iyengar (1991) concludes:

> The use of either the episodic or the thematic news frame affects how individuals assign responsibility for political issues; ...episodic framing tends to elicit individualistic rather than societal attributions of responsibility while thematic framing has the opposite effect. Since television news is heavily episodic, its effect is generally to induce attributions of responsibility to individual victims or perpetrators rather than to broad societal forces.

A vivid example of media framing effects is provided by the literature on crime, race, and the news. Researchers have identified a pattern of crime news reporting that contains two striking regularities: crime is violent and criminal perpetrators are nonwhite (Entman, 1990, 1992; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Romer, Jamieson, and de Coteau, 1998). As Entman (1998) notes, "TV news, especially local news, paints a picture of Blacks as violent and threatening toward whites, self-interested and demanding of the body politic — continually causing or being victimized by problems that seem endless." (p. 19)

Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) find that this framework of crime news reporting, contributes to a narrative "script" that has taken on the value of common knowledge.[2] In a series of experimental studies they show that exposure to a "mug shot" of a violent black perpetrator in the news leads white viewers to endorse negative stereotypes about African-Americans and support punitive crime policies such as the death penalty and "three strikes" legislation (see also, Peffley, Shields, and Williams, 1996). The script is so ingrained, in fact, that about two-thirds of the white subjects who saw no perpetrator at all mistakenly claimed they had seen a perpetrator, and over three-quarters of these people said the perpetrator was black (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). In other words, the issue of crime, like other issues such as welfare and drug use, has become "race-coded" (Gilens, 1999; Beckett, 1995). In understanding the power of frames, we must be able to interpret not only what is obvious in the symbolism, but also what has been encoded over time into the references; this will become especially significant as we examine youth issues and their relationship to race.

Messages conveyed by mainstream media take on the value of public narratives about the ways of the world.

In sum, the modern literature on framing confirms and extends Bateson's original observation. As Vincent Price (1992) concludes, "public opinion — whether viewed in philosophical, political, sociological, or psychological terms — remains fundamentally a communication concept." (p. 91) Thus messages conveyed by mainstream media take on the value of public narratives about the ways of the world. Thus, according to Dearing and Rogers (1996), "...the media can do more than set the public agenda; it can also direct how individuals will evaluate issues." (p. 12) It is this theory of mass media's pervasive influence in concealing and prioritizing public options upon which strategic frame analysis rests.

While our approach outlines a different conceptual framework, it also relies on a unique methodology that seeks

to marry the principles of the cognitive and social sciences. In the next section we discuss our research design and the various measurement tools we utilize to understand public thinking about youth.

Methodology

Strategic frame analysis relies on a series of methods adapted from traditional opinion research, media studies and cultural and cognitive fieldwork. These include: survey research, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, media content analysis, metaphor analysis, and media effects tests. While some of these methods overlap and may appear redundant, we have found that the validation of outcomes across disciplines and methods allows greater confidence in what are often counterintuitive findings. We use combinations of these methods for both the framing and reframing phases of our work.

The underlying research value of our approach is methodological pluralism. As such we rely on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Strategic frame analysis proceeds by first identifying the dominant frame of an issue as it resides in both public opinion and the mass media. With regards to public opinion, we typically perform an analytical review of existing public opinion data (from a variety of national, state, and local polls) to determine the public's general attitudes and policy preferences pertaining to a particular issue. When resources are available, we also conduct our own national survey.

From this quantitative data, we form general impressions about public thinking that, in turn, guide the development of qualitative instruments for focus group analysis and "elicitations," an adaptation by Cultural Logic, Inc. of one-on-one cognitive interviews. Both approaches carry the advantage of allowing for a more textured reading of public thinking. The latter do so by utilizing a semi-structured interview format that allows trained cognitive observers to study participants engaged in their own reasoning about a particular issue. Thus we are able to insert new information into the dialogue and to observe the process by which ordinary people return to their original frames. This technique also allows us to challenge participants' issue positions, to ask for elucidations and to study the grammar of these cognitive transactions. In focus groups, we observe group dynamics to determine how well strongly held cultural models, and alternative models that are weaklier held but promise better policy-related attitudes, hold up to public discussion and group critique. At the same time, we also use focus groups as the preliminary test bed for evolving hypotheses about alternative "reframes." The end result of this stage of the research is to characterize how an issue is framed in the public mind and accepted in public discourse.

Adults believe that teens today are "different" than they were in the past.

Content analysis is a widely accepted practice in communications research to ascertain news media frames (Entman, 1990). The basic technique is to capture news reports — either broadcast or print — over a given time period and code media coverage of a particular issue. For example, a content analysis of local television news would develop codes that characterize the frequency (e.g., how often the issue is reported), content (e.g., are the stories episodic or thematic?), presentation (e.g., lead story, visuals), and tone (e.g., empathy, objectification) of the issue coverage (Dorfman & Woodruff, 1998; Gilens, 1999; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; McManus & Dorfman, 2000).

Our approach to content analysis has been to adapt core principles of strategic frame analysis to this technique, including for example new definitions and measurements of episodic and thematic coverage, of solutions-oriented subthemes, and of the kinds of news messengers typically included in broadcasts. The immediate result is a clear understanding of the elements of major frames that characterize reporting on any given issue, as well as an identification of those frames the media chooses to ignore. Overall, this approach allows us to identify the relevant news media frames that give meaning to social, political, and cultural phenomena.

Our next task, following this body of completed work, is to determine how media frames influence public thinking about issues. In other words, we seek to empirically gauge the effect of dominant media frames as well as potential reframes. Controlled experiments are the method of choice among media effects researchers. Experiments have the advantage of greater precision in estimating causal effects. Random assignment of study participants means that the only difference between any two groups of subjects is exposure to the experimental manipulation. Since all other attributes of the experiment are identical we can attribute any observed differences on outcomes to the treatment.

The preceding work on framing makes it possible for us to derive hypotheses about the impact of dominant frames on public reasoning. Put differently, we use the findings from the framing analysis to aid in the construction of the experimental questionnaires. Thus the questionnaires ask participants to reveal their attitudes about the causes of, and solutions to, social problems and their views about specific groups, institutions, and policies. The answers to these questions are used to operationalize core dependent (and in some instances, intermediary) variables. In substantive terms, this

means we assess the impact of the experimental manipulations by observing their influence on subjects' social and political beliefs.

To reiterate a point we have been making throughout the paper, our approach is strategic in the sense that it develops and empirically tests alternative frames, or what we call *reframes*. The basis for the reframes is also a product of the framing analysis. In other words, we look for metaphors, messages, icons, and language to construct alternative media depictions of target groups and issues. These *alternative* models become the material for the experimental treatments in the reframing analysis. We then proceed to empirically test the impact of reframes on public attitudes and preferences in the same manner as the analysis of dominant frames described above.

In sum, our theoretical structure is rooted in key concepts from the social and cognitive sciences that explain how people reason about the world. In our formulation we call special attention to the role of the news media in creating and evoking particular cognitive models. Thus strategic frame analysis identifies the dominant frame as it exists in public opinion and is reflected in the media, demonstrates its impact on public thinking, and identifies, measures, and tests alternative frames that can change decision outcomes. It does so by relying on a varied approach that equally values quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Strategic frame analysis is different from other approaches in several important respects. At a broad level, our method is a marriage of both basic and applied research. Our point of departure is a perception among issues advocates that current policy solutions are being driven by a skewed perception of reality resulting in proposals that differ markedly from those proposed by experts. Our research design tests the assumption that public perception is indeed at variance with expert remedies, as defined by scholars and policy advocates. We then explore the contribution of media to this distortion, documenting the specific impact on public attitudes of the dominant frames of news coverage. Drawing from our identification of alternative models people hold, we construct and test their impact on policy positions. We then explain these dominant frames to issues advocates and share with them those reframes that have the greatest potential for encouraging public reconsideration of an issue (e.g., alternative policy solutions). We believe the outcome of this work has much to offer issues advocates and policy experts. Unfortunately, this kind of anticipatory research is altogether missing from most mass media efforts devoted to public education.

Over the course of six focus groups with parents, we observed astonishing unanimity in the way adults discounted positive statistics about youth.

Findings

This section of the paper applies the basic principles of strategic frame analysis to discern what Americans think about youth (especially teenagers), why they think what they do, what consequences this has for youth policy and policy advocates, and how we might best engage Americans in a discussion about positive youth development.[3]

Youth Issues in the Public Mind

Adults believe that teens today are "different" than they were in the past. At the core of this concern is a feeling that today's teens have rejected traditional American values. Bostrom (2000a) reports "...only 16% of Americans say that 'young people under the age of 30 share most of their moral and ethical values.' In the eyes of adults, this puts young people's values above only those of homosexuals, welfare recipients, and rich people." A Gallup poll found that, when asked what word applied to young people in their teens and 20s today, compared to young people in that same group 20 years ago, adults chose "selfish" (81%) and "materialistic" (79%) for youth today, and "patriotic" (65%) and "idealistic" (49%) for the youth of yesteryears (Bostrom, 2000a).

Bostrom concludes, "While adults have serious reservations about American youth...the reality is that teens place high value on honesty and hard work, and the vast majority are thinking and planning seriously for the future." Among those values teens say they rank highest are "being honest" (8.6 on a 10 point scale), "working hard" (8.4), "being a good student" (7.9), and "giving time to helping others" (7.6%). And majorities of teens say they volunteer, attend church or synagogue weekly, read the newspaper regularly and attend cultural events (Bostrom, 2000a).

Additionally, Bostrom (2000a) notes that, "...while the public tends to blame parents, the reality is that most parents have open, trusting relationships and a solid bond with their teenage children." Indeed, when asked whom they most rely on for making important decisions or for facing problems, parents are the top choice, with 63% of teens saying they rely on their parents a "lot." There has been an important shift in responsibility, she notes:

> While in 1997, the public was equally likely to blame kids' problems on social/economic pressures as well as irresponsible parents (41% and 44% respectively), in the

improved economy, they are more likely to blame parents (37% blame social/economic pressures, 49% parents) .

In fact, James Youniss and Allison Ruth (2000) have shown that, on virtually every social indicator, "youth today are at least as healthy or healthier than their parents' generation." Drawing from national databases and trend analysis, Youniss shows that "the percentage of youth who work part-time has remained constant or risen a bit from 1970 to today" and "SAT scores have remained constant since 1970." The proportions of high school students who volunteer have not changed since 1975, and the proportion of high school seniors who say religion is very or quite important in their lives has remained high and constant from 1975 to the present. Thus there is a stark disjuncture between the way American adults view teenagers and what teens think and do (see also Males, 1996).

Are adults simply "misinformed" about the lives and attitudes of today's youth? Typically, opinion research would look for a set of facts which, when put before the public, proved sufficiently powerful to correct the fallacy. By contrast, strategic frame analysis asks whether a simple recitation of the facts can indeed set the record straight. Over the course of six focus groups with parents, we observed astonishing unanimity in the way adults discounted positive statistics about youth. Confronted with what was presented as a "true news story" about recent trends among teenagers, adults consistently overlooked the positive data (which dominated the story) and focused instead on the few negative trends. When asked to re-examine the story and to explain why they thought it was indeed negative when there were so many positive trends, study participants first said they thought the numbers were not correct. When informed that they were indeed correct, they found ways to re-interpret the numbers in order to reach a "not good enough" conclusion (Bostrom, 2000b). Clearly the power of the organizing frame "kids are in trouble" was so strong that it could not be displaced easily.

How do such public understandings become so firmly (if erroneously) lodged in the public's mind? Strategic frame analysis points to the media as an influential source of public affairs information. By featuring some stories, and ignoring others, the media has the capacity to confirm and sustain public perceptions. This being so, we would expect to find the dominant media frame routinely depicts youth in a pejorative light. Testing this assertion is the goal of the next section.

Media Depictions of Youth and Youth-Related Issues

In their analysis of television news, the Center for Media and Public Affairs found a paucity of news reporting about youth — only one out of every 12 stories on local newscasts, and only one out of every 25 stories on network news dealt with young people.[4] These stories were "overwhelmingly episodic in nature, focusing on particular events and discrete occurrences, without providing any thematic context or otherwise linking them to broader trends or issues." Indeed, only 7% of the local coverage was deemed thematic. The three most frequently reported topics of youth news on the local stations were crime victimization, accidents involving young people, and violent juvenile crime, accounting for nearly half (46%) of all coverage of youth. Five other frequently reported topics were also negative: property crimes committed by juveniles, domestic violence or sexual abuse, alcohol abuse, individual health problems, and other at-risk behaviors. The authors conclude that "together, these eight topics, which all emphasize the dangers and negative outcomes associated with youth, accounted for nearly 60 percent of all discussions" (Amundson, Lichter, & Lichter, 2000).

The three most frequently reported topics of youth news on the local stations were crime victimization, accidents involving young people, and violent juvenile crime, accounting for nearly half (46%) of all coverage of youth.

An analysis of the visual backdrop to news reports about youth found the local news emphasized school settings. The criminal justice system accounted for one out of every four visual backdrops in local news. When not shown in school, youths were most likely to be seen as part of community activities, or in a crime-related or other socially dysfunctional setting. A mere two percent of young people were portrayed in the home, while just one percent were shown in a work setting.

To chart the implications for policy solutions, we asked the Center for Media and Public Affairs to count the instances in which a reporter or source specifically voices concern about the risks or dangers faced by young people. The 242 sound bites that resulted were concentrated in two areas: violence (33%) and other at-risk behaviors (31%), such as drug and alcohol use and dangerous driving. "Only about one in three expressions of concern were accompanied by any discussion of the locus of responsibility for solving whatever problem was indicated. And, of these assignments, parents

and youth themselves accounted for 37% of the responsible agents, followed by schools (30%) and government (26%)."[5] (Amundson, Lichter, & Lichter, 2000).

How do these negative media depictions square with adults' own observations of the youth around them? In the main, according to our focus groups, not very well. A father of younger children spoke up about teens in his neighborhood: "I have some extremely intelligent, articulate, young — 12 to 16 year olds. Surprisingly, actually, to speak with such perfect English, respectful. Sometimes it shocks me" (Bostrom, 2000b). When presented with statistics about volunteers, while most participants refused to believe the data, one woman acknowledged that she lacked the information required to make a judgment:

> Personally, I wouldn't know because I haven't volunteered...I see them (teens) at church because I go and I'll see them in the mall because I go. But perhaps if I went and served at a soup kitchen, I might see it jack full of teenagers. Because my butt is at home eating my soup in front of the TV, I don't see them.

In short, people are routinely uninformed or ill-informed about American youth.

Personal experience does play a strong role in resisting these stereotypes. Aubrun and Grady (2000) found that "parents of teenagers or those who interact regularly with teenagers are much less susceptible to media portrayals of teens." These people either reject media accounts outright or concede that they must be true in some abstract sense (or TV wouldn't be saying so), but not in any practical sense. The more people's views are informed by 'face time' and the less by the media, the more likely they are to hold a more empathic view of teenagers.[6]

As Aubrun and Grady (2000) assert, most Americans:

> Tend to resolve this contradiction by judging their own experience to be exceptional, rather than by challenging the media frames. This reflects a broader pattern of Americans' response to the contradiction between what they know at first hand and what media and public discourse tells them. The position of the media has the effect of making their own experience and attitudes seem unusual or even aberrant. They tend to discount what does not fit the media frame as exceptional, rather than questioning or challenging the frame.

Aubrun and Grady's interviews demonstrate as well that most adults "are aware (at times) that this negative model is a negative stereotype rather than an accurate representation of the teens that they know." They cite one informant who observed, "You know that there've got to be hundreds of thousands of them that are going to college and that have made national honor society or...who are trying to do the right things. But you hardly ever hear about them."

The absence of an experiential base for some adults, and the power of media images to trump personal experience for others, leaves most adults with few alternatives to the images provided by their daily feed of news and entertainment.

The findings from previous media effects experiments further informed the research agenda we pursued on adolescence. In the course of an inquiry for the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention, we tested the impact of two issue ads that reflect conventional wisdom about how to demonstrate the effectiveness of program intervention in positive outcomes for youth. These spot ads were created by the advertising firm of Martin and Glantz for paid placement as part of a campaign to recruit liberal activists for gun reform petitions. The ads were reportedly effective in meeting this very specific objective. Our interest in them was, however, broader. First, we wanted to evaluate their impact on preferences across a much broader viewing public. Second, because the two ads reflect a manner of framing common among child advocates, we wanted to test their actual impact on public views.

Both ads asserted that program intervention in the lives of children could make a dramatic difference on outcomes. In the first ad – "Jeremy Estrada" – a young person tells the story of his initial brush with violence, and how he was put in a mentoring and rehabilitation program that turned his life around.[7] Presumably, the reason Jeremy is now on track to enroll in medical school is because he was not tried as an adult or subjected to more punitive criminal justice measures. The prediction was that this ad would lead viewers to endorse similar youth intervention programs and to reject punitive laws for youth. The findings, however, were mixed at best. While exposure to the Jeremy Estrada PSA did increase people's optimism about solving youth crime, it also reduced subjects' willingness to support social remedies to youth crime (Gilliam, 1999).

In the second ad – "Jimmy's Flashback" – a young (white) person is shown in a robbery and the "flashback" sequence suggests the many possible points of intervention when his life could have been turned around, had effective

programs been available to him.[8] This ad suggests the popular prevention frame that we need to start early and to intervene often in order to keep kids on track for achievement. The prediction is that exposure to this ad would reduce fear of crime and increase support for social interventions. To the contrary, our experimental results indicate that exposure to Jimmy's Flashback increased fear of crime by 14%, decreased the number of people who believe no age is too late to help a young person, and reduced levels of support for more social spending (Gilliam, 1999).

From the view of strategic frame analysis, the failure of both ads to move public will in the desired direction is not surprising. In both cases, the ads relied upon a similar script. The youth was initially portrayed as violent, or even criminal. Thus once the readily familiar image of the teen "superpredator" was evoked, no amount of argumentation or facts could negate that powerful cultural model. In effect, this kind of "straw man" presentation is a flawed frame.

In virtually every aspect of our research to date, the ability to connect youth outcomes to community programs and public policies proved an insurmountable obstacle for adults.

In sum, the absence of an experiential base for some adults, and the power of media images to trump personal experience for others, leaves most adults with few alternatives to the images provided by their daily feed of news and entertainment. And while they may understand this to be the case, and resent the media for it, they nevertheless will find their reasoning directed by these images.

Reframing Youth

The overwhelming assessment for adults are that kids are trouble or troubled; these frames emerged again and again from the research as the frames that dominated discourse and blocked the consideration of new facts or policy recommendations. In the course of this research we rejected four potential reframes derived from hypotheses common among youth advocates and researchers:

Hypothesis 1: By presenting people with the "true" facts about youth (which are not received through the media), we can succeed in getting them to reconsider and reject negative stereotypes about youth.

Finding: The positive facts were rejected, both in focus groups and in the elicitations, or reinterpreted as negative or "not good enough."

Hypothesis 2: By showing that most kids are busy doing normal things, adults will resort to their own experience with youth and realize that most kids are doing well.

Finding: Adults exceptionalized their own experiences and the images of ordinary kids presented, and resorted to the stereotype.

Hypothesis 3: By showing adults that youth are working, we can demonstrate that youth have work values.

Finding: In fact, adults first denied the statistics and then explained away the values youth might acquire from work experience by attaching their motivation for work to consumerism.

Hypothesis 4: By connecting adults to their own adolescence, we could create empathy with today's teens and a reconsideration of youth.

Finding: Adults did express greater empathy for youth and the challenges of adolescence when focus groups began with a priming exercise that required them to remember their own teen years. But, while this exercise did generate greater empathy, it also served to remind them how different and dangerous is the world in which they perceive today's teen to live, and deepened their concern for the physical safety of youth.

At the same time, we did find a number of instances in which adults described youth in positive terms, and often using values associated with work (e.g., discipline and commitment). These activities include: group sports, performing arts, and volunteer/community service. For example, focus group participants, confronted with the image of a young woman playing soccer, said, "When I see a girl in sports, I immediately think she has a chance to succeed in life." Reacting to a picture of a young boy volunteering at what appeared to be a soup kitchen, one mother commented, "He is going to be an asset to his community just because he is already at a young age involved in community." Hypothetically, assessments of youth involved in these activities are the basis for successful "reframes."[9]

By extension, coaches and volunteer/community leaders may prove effective spokespersons in attesting to the values that youth are acquiring from these types of activities. Likewise, the recognition that the problem with adult perceptions of youth is related to their perceived lack of values, especially work values, may dictate that we use seniors to attest to youth's worthiness. Older Americans, especially of the World War II era, appear to convey a lifetime of work habits and values.

The challenge in these incipient reframes will be the connection to community responsibility. In virtually every aspect of our research to date, the ability to connect youth outcomes to community programs and public policies proved an insurmountable obstacle for adults. Building responsibility into the frame, beyond youth themselves and their parents remains a major undertaking. This is the challenge facing our next phase of research.[10]

Discussion

We advance an approach to the examination of social problems called *strategic frame analysis*. Our framework is theoretically grounded in the social and cognitive sciences. Thus for any particular issue we identify dominant frames of understanding as they are found in public discourse and the mass media. We then empirically assess their impact on public attitudes and policy preferences. Based on this analysis, we develop and later test the capacity of alternative frames to influence public will. In sum, we employ a wide array of analytic and methodological approaches to study the dynamics of public action.

In this paper we have applied strategic frame analysis to the issue of America's youth. In particular, we examined how the public thinks about adolescents, how the media depicts adolescents, and how this affects the policy context. Our initial research has shown that the dominant public and media practice is to frame youth in a negative light. The consequence is that the adult public has come to view youth as a liability. While these findings are troubling and clearly present important challenges, more troubling still are the implications for public policy. Advocates are likely to find that the driving force for policy consideration is a sense that youth are at-risk for negative outcomes and must be protected from danger and dangerous influences. Thus, more remedial and punitive policy is likely to be considered, while programs and policies seeking to help youth develop their academic, personal and career potential are likely to be deemed irrelevant.

What this means is that even within specific issue domains, the policy options that translate into keeping youth out of trouble will be most salient. For example, after school programs for troubled youth will be deemed more important than those that promise to develop youth's potential or to promote positive mental health. In such a debate, issues of program quality and efficacy are lost to the over-riding concern for safety, keeping youth out of trouble and protecting society from them.

Our research suggests that the locus of responsibility for problem solution is likely to be on youth and their parents first, followed by schools. The role of community and government in promoting youth development remains invisible to the public and is therefore incapable of exerting pressure on policymakers. In this, our work confirms earlier research that demonstrates public willingness to blame parents more than social forces for problems with kids (Public Agenda, 1999). The implication is that attributions of responsibly will revert to individual youths and their families, not to the society at-large. The next iteration of our research is to test whether it is possible to "reframe" youth in ways that engage adults in their healthy development. Put differently, can we change the frames through which we see our youth in such a way that adults resist the pressures to demonize and distort in favor of an appreciation of adolescence as a developmental stage? Or, put another way, can we change the story we are telling about youth in such a way that it triggers an understanding of systemic influences on individual outcomes and foregrounds positive adolescent development, not risky individual behaviors? The proof is whether exposure to these reframes can increase support for policies and programs suggested by experts in adolescent development. Early results have uncovered several intriguing possibilities. The next step is to subject these hypotheses to empirical testing utilizing controlled experiments of the sort described above. In other words, is it possible to change the lens with which American adults view youth today?

Can we change the story we are telling about youth in such a way that it triggers an understanding of systemic influences on individual outcomes and foregrounds positive adolescent development, not risky individual behaviors?

Our findings also have clear implications for the practice of journalism. News organizations must remember that they have civic as well as commercial responsibilities. While we appreciate the pressures to produce a profit, as well as journalistic imperatives to report "newsworthy" stories, we also call attention to the fact that media outlets are part and parcel of the communities they serve. While this obligation is more formal with regards to FCC regulations for broadcasters, print outlets also have community responsibilities. Indeed, this is not lost on news organizations. They routinely engage in "outreach" programs aimed at serving the wider community. Nonetheless, these efforts are often not taken seriously and are shunted off to the fringes of the organization's activities. From our perspective, journalists must understand the impact of their reporting as well as think more seriously about the paradigms within which they work.

These revised practices must begin with the recognition

that news characteristics are often rooted in old stereotypes; that is, a conventionalized frame that directs reporters to emphasize certain elements of a story and not others. It is our contention that news media coverage of youth today falls prey to such common stereotypes. As our research intimates, repeated coverage of such stereotypes takes its toll on the public's willingness to prioritize public dollars for this population. In effect, news coverage of this sort intervenes inappropriately in the public policy process.

Notes

[1]The W.T. Grant Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation have generously supported this work. We would also like to thank George Lakoff, Larry Wallack, Shanto Iyengar, Margaret Bostrom, Joe Grady, Axel Aubrun, and Pam Morgan for their contributions to the development of the approach outlined in this paper as well as Dan Amundson, Robert Lichter and Linda Lichter at the Center for Media and Public Affairs and Katharine Heintz-Knowles for their willingness to adapt already extant methodologies to accommodate strategic frame analysis. We would also like to thank the Institute of Social Science Research (UCLA) and David Willis, Pam Singh, and Jessica Hausman at the Center for Communications and Community (UCLA).

[2] The theoretical basis for their findings is based on the concept of "scripts" (see Schank and Abelson, 1977). The advantage of script-based reasoning is that it allows people to make straightforward and what they believe to be accurate inferences about the world around them.

[3]This body of research was supported by the W. T. Grant Foundation, as part of a multi-year grant to apply strategic frame analysis to youth issues, and supplemented by six focus groups supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

[4] Although the work described in this paper deals with the television news media, we have also commissioned work on how youth are portrayed in the entertainment media. Heintz-Knowles (2000) examined one episode of each primetime entertainment series aired during Fall 1999 between September 20 and November 21 on the six broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, WB, UPN). Those with youth characters (defined as between the ages of 13 and 21) were analyzed according to a set of codes which sought to measure youth activity and concern on TV against real world data. In brief, this study shows adolescent characters on television are not connected to a wider community, including even their own family. TV teens are seen as independent and isolated, living in an adolescent world whose problems are mainly social in nature. They do not require anyone's help beyond their small immediate peer group, and in fact their parents are often portrayed as ineffective or as causing problems. This FrameWorks report concludes that TV reinforces the notion of today's teens as self-absorbed and interested only in trivial matters.

[5] Our study sample was limited to television, leaving us open to criticism that more influential publics may be more reliant on newspapers for their information and, therefore, exposed to more thematic and policy-oriented coverage of adolescents. The work of other researchers, however, would refute this claim. For instance, the Berkeley Media Studies Group (McManus and Dorfman, 2000) studied three California newspapers over the course of a year to determine what kind of attention was being paid to young people with what probable policy consequences. They found that "two topics dominate youth coverage: education and violence" (p. 4), and no other topic receives even a third as much attention. Education received 26% of the coverage. Violence stories comprised 25% of all youth coverage. Thus, these print media show violence as a factor in young people's lives as often as schools. As these researchers point out, "only 3 young people in 100 perpetrate or become victims of serious violence in a given year" and "treating violence and education nearly equally exaggerates the frequency of violence" (p. 4). Finally, "in the yearlong sample, about half the youth stories focus on a problem; many fewer describe a solution" (p. 4). The most often sited solution is greater law enforcement. The study concludes, "...the relative absence of solution frames reinforces the notion that violence is inevitable." (p. 4).

[6] In an increasingly age-segregated society, however, the prospects are fewer and fewer for adults to countermand media stereotypes of teen monsters and heroes with abundant first-hand knowledge of normal teens, going about the everyday business of chores and school, athletics, arts and volunteering.

[7]Jeremy Estrada: This well-known PSA features Jeremy Estrada – a former member of a Latino street gang – who turns his life around after six months in a "rites of passage" program. The dramatic device begins with Jeremy dressed like a gang member. As he tells the story of his transformation, he slowly changes his clothes. At the end of the video, now dressed like a responsible young adult, he proudly points out that he has a university fellowship and plans to attend medical school. His tag line is, "I may cut, but it'll be to take out your appendix."

[8] Jimmy's Flashback: The dramatic device of this ad is a flashback sequence in the life of Jimmy – a teenage Caucasian male who is shown robbing a convenience store. The flashback episodes show different periods in Jimmy's life where he could have been set on the "right track". The tag line is that the failure to intervene early in Jimmy's life is now costing the taxpayers a great deal of money. The ad

ends with a number to call "if you think we can do better".

[9] Interestingly, while these three images did not include parents, the focus group participants inferred that the parents were "good," a rare assessment in our others' research experience (see Public Agenda, 1999). Focus group informants mentioned that parents had to take them to and from these events, regulate their evening hours, keep them on a schedule and teach them focus.

[10] We are currently in the process of producing several news reframes based on the results of the analyses described above. Over the next few months, we will conduct both field and survey experiments to empirically assess the capability of designated reframes to move public will youth-related issues.

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Social Policy Report (ISSN 1075-7031) is published four times a year by the Society for Research in Child Development. Its purpose is twofold: (1) to provide policymakers with objective reviews of research findings on topics of current national interest, and (2) to inform the SRCD membership about current policy issues relating to children and about the state of relevant research.

Content

The *Report* provides a forum for scholarly reviews and discussions of developmental research and its implications for policies affecting children. The Society recognizes that few policy issues are noncontroversial, that authors may well have a "point of view," but the *Report* is not intended to be a vehicle for authors to advocate particular positions on issues. Presentations should be balanced, accurate, and inclusive. The publication nonetheless includes the disclaimer that the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Society or the editors.

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Social Policy Report

Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away

Volume XV, Number 4 2001

Adolescents as Adults in Court: A Developmental Perspective on the Transfer of Juveniles to Criminal Court

Laurence Steinberg and Elizabeth Cauffman

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Summary

For the past 100 years, American society has treated most juvenile infractions as matters to be adjudicated as delinquent acts within a separate juvenile justice system designed to recognize the special needs and immature status of young people and emphasize rehabilitation over punishment. In recent years, however, there has been a dramatic shift in the way juvenile crime is viewed by policy-makers and the general public. Rather than choosing to define offenses committed by youth as delinquent, society is increasingly opting to deal with young offenders by redefining these juveniles as adults and adjudicating their cases in criminal court. Approximately 200,000 individuals under the age of 18 are tried in criminal court annually in the United States.

This *Social Policy Report* examines the transfer of juveniles to the adult system from a developmental perspective. Three specific questions guide our analysis:

1. Are juveniles competent to stand trial as defendants in an adversarial criminal court proceeding?
2. Are juveniles, by virtue of developmental immaturity, less blameworthy than adults, and if so, do they deserve less or different punishment than adults for comparable crimes?
3. Are juveniles more amenable to treatment than adults and therefore poorly served within a criminal justice system whose main response to crime is punishment, or are juveniles no more likely to profit from rehabilitation than older offenders?

For each of these questions, we examine what we know about the development of the underlying capacities and competencies presumed to affect adjudicative competence, criminal culpability, and amenability to treatment and ask whether it is possible to draw bright-line, chronologically-based boundaries that reliably distinguish juveniles from adults.

Although psycholegal research that directly examines these questions is needed, indirect evidence, drawn from studies of normative cognitive and psychosocial development, raises serious concerns about the transfer of individuals under 13 to adult court. At the other end of the continuum, it is likely that the vast majority of individuals 17 and older are not appreciably different from adults in ways that would prohibit their fair adjudication within the criminal justice system. We conclude that variability among individuals between the ages of 13 and 16 requires that some sort of individualized assessment of an offender's competence to stand trial, blameworthiness, and likely amenability to treatment be made before reaching a transfer decision.

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From the Editors

In this issue, Drs. Steinberg and Cauffman review work emerging from a MacArthur Foundation Network dealing with the criminal treatment of youth offenders. There has been a tendency in recent years to treat juveniles as adults, particularly if the crime is egregious such as murder. This article reviews the developmental implications of such an approach, illustrating the necessity of considering developmental processes (e.g., the extent to which an individual has the competency to be held blameworthy) when implementing policy or altering it. It demonstrates how critical it is that we consider both development and what we know from research as we implement policy changes in such areas.

For example, the recent tendency to get tough on adults committing crimes has been extended to youth. This approach has not been adequately attentive to what we know from research. Growth in the violent crime rate has paralleled the growth in incarceration rate. If incarceration impacted the crime rate, we would expect the crime rate to decrease as incarceration increased. It has not. Similarly adolescence is a time of experimentation; this also applies to aggression. There is an increase in aggression during adolescence. For most youth, the level of aggression declines as the youth move into young adulthood. It does not decline for young African American males—unless they have a stable job or a stable relationship. This work by Delbert Elliot, University of Colorado, implies that assistance with the transition to adulthood might have more impact on the crime rate than incarceration. Research indicates that the most effective approach to policy may not always be the most direct one.

If what we know about youth development from research is applied to criminal proceedings, youth of all ages are more likely to be treated fairly and appropriately for their developmental level. By treating youth appropriately we reduce the likelihood that they will enter a lifetime career of crime and thereby contribute not just to the well-being of youth but also to reducing crime.

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Adolescents as Adults in Court: A Developmental Perspective on the Transfer of Juveniles to Criminal Court [1]

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Few issues challenge a society's ideas about both the nature of human development and the nature of justice as much as serious juvenile crime. Because we neither expect children to be criminals nor expect crimes to be committed by children, the unexpected intersection between childhood and criminality creates a dilemma that most people find difficult to resolve. Indeed, the only ways out of this problem are either to redefine the offense as something less serious than a crime or to redefine the offender as someone who is not really a child (Zimring 1998).

For the past 100 years, American society has most often chosen the first approach – redefining the offense – by treating most juvenile infractions as matters to be adjudicated as delinquent acts within a separate juvenile justice system designed to recognize the special needs and immature status of young people and emphasize rehabilitation over punishment. When a five-year-old shoots his sister with a gun, few argue that the child's behavior is criminal. When a 25-year old does this, few argue that it is *not* criminal. The presumption behind the juvenile justice system is that, while teenagers are certainly more mature than five-year-olds, the same factors that make them ineligible to vote or to serve on a jury require us to treat them differently than adults when they misbehave.

Few issues challenge a society's ideas about both the nature of human development and the nature of justice as much as serious juvenile crime.

In recent years, however, there has been a dramatic shift in the way juvenile crime is viewed by policy-makers and the general public. Rather than choosing to define offenses committed by youth as delinquent, society is increasingly opting to deal with young offenders by redefining these juveniles as adults.

This trend is clearly reflected in the growing number of juveniles whose cases are being adjudicated in adult criminal court, either by statute (i.e., where a state's law calls for the automatic filing of certain charges in criminal court, even when the offender is a juvenile, or where the state's boundary between juvenile and criminal court simply is drawn at an age below 18), prosecutorial discretion (i.e., where a state permits a prosecutor to charge a juvenile in adult court, if circumstances are believed to warrant it), or judicial waiver (i.e., where a judge determines that the appropriate venue for a juvenile's adjudication is criminal, not juvenile, court). Precise estimates of the numbers of juveniles tried in criminal court are difficult to come by, but most experts agree that the numbers have risen in recent years. Today, approximately 200,000 individuals under the age of 18 are tried in criminal court annually in the United States.

In 1997, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation launched its Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice to examine, from a developmental perspective, a range of issues related to the treatment of juvenile offenders within the justice system. Among the Network's many research projects currently underway are studies of age differences in individuals' competence to stand trial in criminal court, of the perceived and actual criminal blameworthiness of children and youth, of the developmental trajectories of serious juvenile offenders and the pathways that lead them out of crime, and of the differential impact of juvenile versus adult sanctions on young people. Two edited volumes produced by the Network, *Youth on Trial: A Developmental Perspective on Juvenile Justice* (Grisso & Schwartz, 2000) and *The Changing Borders of Juvenile Justice: Transfer of Adolescents to the Criminal Court* (Fagan & Zimring, 2000), provide further reading for those interested in exploring these issues further.

In this *Social Policy Report*, we apply a developmental perspective to the question of whether and under what circumstances juveniles should be tried as adults. We recognize that many considerations, including concerns about public safety, victims' rights, and retributive justice, are valid components of a discussion of the transfer issue. Nevertheless, we believe that a comprehensive analysis of the matter necessitates some consideration of what we know about adolescent psychological development.

Adjudicating Adolescents as Adults: Developmental Implications

Transferring a juvenile to criminal court has three sets of implications that lend themselves to a developmental analysis. First, transfer to adult court alters the legal process by which a minor is tried. Criminal court is based on an adversarial model, while juvenile court has been based, at least in theory, on a more cooperative model. This difference in the climates of juvenile versus adult court is significant because it is unclear at what age individuals have sufficient understanding of the ramifications of the adversarial process and the different vested interests of prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges.

Second, the legal standards applied in adult and juvenile courts are different in a number of ways. For example, competence to stand trial is presumed among adult defendants unless they suffer from a serious mental illness or substantial mental retardation. Competence to stand trial is rarely an issue in juvenile court. It is unclear whether the presumption of adjudicative competence holds for juveniles tried as adults, who, even in the absence of mental retardation or mental illness, may lack sufficient competence to participate in the adjudicative process (Grisso & Schwartz, 2000). Standards for judging culpability – the extent to which an individual can be held accountable or blameworthy for damage or injury he or she causes – may be different in juvenile versus adult courts as well. Again, in the absence of mental illness or substantial deficiency, adults are presumed to be responsible for their own behavior. We do not know the extent to which this presumption applies to juveniles.

Finally, the choice of trying a young offender in adult versus juvenile court often determines the possible outcomes of the adjudication. In adult court, the outcome of being found guilty of a serious crime is nearly always some sort of punishment. In juvenile court, the outcome of being found delinquent also may be some sort of punishment, but juvenile courts typically retain the option of a rehabilitative disposition, alone or in combination with some punishment. The difference between possible rehabilitation and certain punishment for the juvenile who is waived to adult court has important ramifications. Rather than face a limited amount of time in a training school, the juvenile on trial in adult court for a serious offense faces the very real possibility of a long period of incarceration in prison, with potential iatrogenic consequences and increased risk of recidivism after release (see Bishop & Frasier, 2000). Although this argument may not carry weight with those who favor harsh consequences for young offenders for purposes of retribution, from a utilitarian perspective, a punishment that ultimately results in increased offending does not make very much sense. Thus, even if one were to argue that adolescents have the competencies necessary to participate in an adversarial court proceeding and to be held culpable for their actions, one could still question the wisdom of imposing adult-like sanctions on young offenders.

Developmental research is best utilized not to establish a bright-line boundary between adolescence and adulthood, but to point to age-related trends in legally-relevant attributes.

In sum, the significance of having a jurisdictional boundary between juvenile and adult court inheres in the *presumptions* about age and its relation to development that policy-makers and practitioners hold. The juvenile court operates under the presumption that offenders are immature, in three different senses of the word: their development is incomplete, their judgment is callow, and their character is still maturing. The adult court, in contrast, presumes that defendants are mature: competent, responsible, and unlikely to change.[2] Which of these presumptions best characterizes individuals between the ages of 12 and 17? Is there an approximate age at which the presumptions of the criminal court become more applicable to an offender than the presumptions of the juvenile court?

Because developmentalists have learned a great deal about the transitions that occur between childhood and adulthood in the realms of competence, responsibility, and malleability, their research may be valuable in guiding the formulation of transfer policies founded on scientifically verifiable developmental evidence. This is the good news.

The bad news is that developmental research rarely yields the sorts of dichotomous boundaries that are customarily used to create bright-line age distinctions under the law. Most developmental analyses reveal that development is gradual rather than abrupt, quantitative rather than qualitative, and highly variable among individuals of the same chronological age. Accordingly, developmental research is best utilized not to establish a bright-line boundary between adolescence and adulthood, but to point to age-related trends in legally-relevant attributes, such as the intellectual or emotional capabilities that affect decision-making in court and on the street. These trends can then be used to define legal age

boundaries that are reasonably consistent with the developmental evidence. This approach may be particularly useful in three pursuits relevant to transfer policy:

1. identifying the lower boundary of the age range below which a particular attribute can be safely assumed to be absent, and which, therefore, would preclude the treatment of younger individuals as adults;

2. identifying the upper boundary of the age range beyond which that same attribute may be safely presumed to be present, and which would recommend the treatment of individuals older than this as adults; and

3. delineating the assessment tools to be used and the guidelines to be applied in making differential recommendations about individuals whose age falls between the two boundaries.

This approach leads to the identification of *three*, not two, categories of individuals for purposes of legal decision-making: *juveniles*, who, in this framework, should be categorically non-transferable to criminal court; *adults*, who should be automatically charged in adult court; and, *youths*, whose transferability to criminal court should be determined not on the basis of the alleged offense, but through forensic evaluation (through competence testing, clinical interviews, etc.). This three-way classification scheme more appropriately recognizes the variability in development among individuals who are in the midst of adolescence and the resulting difficulty in drawing bright-line distinctions on the basis of chronological age.

Where, then, do we put the boundaries that define whether someone is a juvenile, a youth, or an adult? We're pretty sure that 5-year-olds are juveniles, and that 25-year-olds are adults. At what age do we start to doubt that a child should be presumed blameless or less blameworthy? And at what age is that doubt replaced by confidence that, in the absence of special circumstances, the person should be presumed to have the faculties of an adult? The challenge is to define this "gray area" as narrowly as possible, but to leave it wide enough that unwarranted assumptions are not made about youths whose maturity can vary significantly from that of their peers.

Translating the Transfer Question into Developmental Issues

The transition from adolescence to adulthood does not occur at a fixed, well-defined age. Not only do different individuals mature at different rates and times, but different abilities may develop at different times as well. Accordingly, instead of asking where to draw the line between adolescence and adulthood for the purposes of making transfer policy, it is more sensible to ask at what ages individuals can be presumed to possess (or to not possess) the various attributes that are potentially relevant to transfer considerations.

To do this, we must be more specific about the aspects of development in question, and we must ask whether, how, and on what timetable these aspects of development change during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The following three questions seem to us to be the most important:

1. *When do individuals become competent to be adjudicated in an adversarial court context?* This question concerns the proper venue for an adolescent's adjudication. Given the adversarial nature of criminal court proceedings, at what age are adolescents likely to possess the skills necessary to protect their own interests in the courtroom and participate effectively in their own defense?

2. *When do individuals meet the criteria for adult blameworthiness?* This question concerns the appropriate amount of punishment for a juvenile offender who has been judged to have committed the offense in question. Is there an age before which individuals, by virtue of "normal" psychological immaturity, should be considered to be of "diminished responsibility" and therefore held less accountable, and proportionately less punishable, for their actions?

3. *Is there a point in development at which individuals cease to be good candidates for rehabilitation, by virtue of the diminished likelihood of change in the psychological and behavioral characteristics thought to affect criminal behavior or because of diminished amenability to treatment?* This concerns the type of sanction imposed on an adolescent who is deemed responsible, and, more specifically, the relative emphasis placed on rehabilitation versus punishment. A fundamental tenet of

the juvenile justice system is that juveniles can be rehabilitated, because their character is not fully formed. In general, children are presumed to be more malleable than adults, but is there a predictable timetable along which individuals change from relatively changeable to relatively unchangeable?

In the following sections, we review the empirical and theoretical evidence regarding the development of competence, accountability, and amenability. Two categories of evidence are relevant: Direct evidence, while rare, is derived from developmental studies of the actual legal phenomena in question – that is, studies of adjudicative competence, criminal accountability, and amenability to rehabilitation. Indirect evidence is derived from studies of the intellectual and psychosocial phenomena presumed to underlie adjudicative competence, criminal accountability, and amenability to rehabilitation – phenomena such as hypothetical thinking, impulse control, or malleability. Although more research is needed to establish the links between these intellectual and psychosocial phenomena and the legal phenomena they are presumed to underlie, general trends in these domains are nevertheless informative.

Research and Theory on Adjudicative Competence

Two specific types of competencies are needed to be tried in criminal court. First, the individual must be competent to assist counsel. More specifically, the Supreme Court posited in *Dusky v. United States* (1960) that competence to stand trial requires that a defendant have "sufficient present ability to consult with his lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding" and "a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him." Second, it has been argued that the individual must also demonstrate "decisional competence": the ability to make decisions about waiving rights, entering pleas, proceeding *pro se*, etc.; this sort of decision-making competence is more advanced than that set out in the *Dusky* criteria (Bonnie, 1992).

Numerous cognitive and social-cognitive competencies that change during the adolescent years likely underlie the development of adjudicative competence, among them, the ability to engage in hypothetical and logical decision-making (in order to weigh the costs and benefits of different pleas), demonstrate reliable episodic memory (in order to provide accurate information about the offense in question), extend thinking into the future (in order to envision the consequences of different pleas), engage in advanced social perspective-taking (in order to understand the roles and motives of different participants in the adversarial process), and understand and articulate one's own motives and psychological state (in order to assist counsel in mounting a defense). Developmental research indicates that these abilities emerge at somewhat different ages, but that it would be highly unlikely that an individual would satisfy all of these criteria much before the age of 12. At the other extreme, research suggests that the majority of individuals have these abilities by age 16 (for analyses of these and other relevant abilities, see Grisso, 1997; Scott, Reppucci, & Woolard, 1995; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996).

There is ample evidence to raise concerns regarding the competence of adolescents under age 15 to participate in criminal trials.

Although direct research regarding adolescents' understanding of court proceedings is limited, there is ample evidence to raise concerns regarding the competence of adolescents under age 15 to participate in criminal trials. Much of this literature has been reviewed and summarized by Grisso (1997). Grisso cites a number of studies indicating that, at or below age 15, scores on standardized competence measures generally fall short of the thresholds below which the competence of *adults* is deemed questionable by experts, and that a third or more of 15- and 16-year olds do not have accurate conceptions of what a "right" is. General knowledge regarding trials and the roles of various participants, however, appears to be fairly well developed by age 13, although increases in familiarity with courtroom concepts continue beyond that age. Thus, although the majority of 13-year-olds would likely meet the minimal *Dusky* criteria, more detailed investigations of adolescents' understanding of their rights and of the implications of courtroom decisions leave little doubt that even at age 15, a significant fraction of adolescents should not be assumed competent to protect their own interests in adversarial legal settings. Several recent cases of young offenders tried as adults, such as those of Nathaniel Brazill (the Florida 14-year-old convicted of having murdered a teacher), or Lionel Tate (the Florida 13-year-old convicted of having killed another child while wrestling with her), in which young adolescents were asked to make decisions about taking the stand in their own defense or accepting a plea agreement, highlight the importance of understanding when, and along what de-

velopmental timetable, individuals develop the capacities necessary to make such complicated courtroom decisions.

It is important to understand the implications of the fact that adolescents may not fully comprehend the meaning of their right to remain silent, or of a decision to accept a plea bargain or take the stand as a defendant. The juvenile court acknowledges diminished competence by having lower (if any) competency standards, by attempting to function in a way that protects the interests of the youngster who may not be able to participate fully in his or her own defense, and by limiting the punitiveness of the punishments to which a less-than-competent defendant might be exposed. The adversarial system of adult criminal courts, in contrast, relies in large part on the competence of the defendant to ensure that his or her attorney has the information necessary to prepare an effective defense, and that the defense is pursued in a manner consistent with the defendant's interests. In the criminal system, it is the defendant who must ultimately make plea decisions and other critical choices throughout the course of a trial.[3] If an adolescent does not have the understanding necessary to make such decisions, the perspective to comprehend the long term consequences of such decisions, or the ability to articulate his or her priorities to counsel, criminal court is an inappropriate venue for adjudicating the offense or determining a sentence.

As we noted earlier, debates about whether and at what age juveniles might be tried as adults involve a complex array of concerns, of which developmental considerations relevant to competence are just one set. With respect to adjudicative competence, however, the available evidence regarding the development of relevant capabilities leads us to suggest that no youngster under the age of 13 should ever be tried in adult court. On the other hand, although more research is needed, especially on samples of poor and nonwhite youth, it is likely that the majority of individuals older than 16 would satisfy both the *Dusky* criteria as well as the broader criteria for "decisional competence." Whether and under what circumstances we should transfer *any* adolescents to the adult court is an important and reasonable question to raise, but regardless of the answer, it seems to us that individuals who are between the ages of 13 and 16 should be evaluated to determine their adjudicative competence before a transfer decision is made. (Similar conclusions were reached by Grisso, 1997.)

If adolescents below a certain age are less blameworthy than adults, perhaps they should receive less, or different, punishment as well.

Research and Theory on Culpability

The adult justice system presumes that defendants who are found guilty are responsible for their own actions and should be held accountable and punished accordingly. Historically, those who are guilty but less responsible for their actions (e.g., because of one or more mitigating factors, such as one's mental state at the time of the crime) receive proportionately less punishment (Fagan & Zimring, 2000). It is therefore worth considering whether, because of the relative immaturity of minors, it may be justified to view them as being less blameworthy than adults for the very same infractions – that is, whether developmental immaturity should be viewed as a relevant mitigating factor, in the way that we view mental illness or self-defense. If, for example, adolescents below a certain age cannot foresee the consequences of their actions, or cannot control their impulses, one should not hold them as blameworthy for their actions as one would hold an adult. And if adolescents below a certain age are less blameworthy than adults, perhaps they should receive less, or different, punishment as well.

Diminished responsibility as a result of developmental immaturity is less likely to be an issue in the adjudicatory phase of a juvenile's hearing (i.e., the phase during which innocence or guilt is established) than during the dispositional phase (i.e., the phase during which the sentence or placement is decided), because the threshold for culpability in the context of an adjudication is so minimal – the ability to form criminal intent and the capacity to appreciate the wrongfulness of one's actions. Absent some sort of mental illness or retardation (which if present in a juvenile should merit the same consideration as in the case of an adult), anyone who is 9 can form criminal intent and appreciate the wrongfulness of an action (Rest, 1983). (In fact, casual observation indicates that even 5-year-olds who willfully take each other's toys for their own benefit know that doing so is wrong.) The extent to which culpability is relevant to the transfer question concerns whether or how, during the dispositional phase of a hearing or trial, a juvenile's developmental immaturity is taken into account.

The rehabilitative ideal of the juvenile court argues against adjudicating a juvenile who is characterized by sufficiently diminished responsibility in a criminal court whose only response can be punitive.[4] Are there age differences in

blameworthiness that are substantial enough to affect legal judgments about culpability? Specifically, is there an age below which we can presume sufficiently diminished responsibility to argue that immaturity is a mitigating factor which should prevent an individual from being tried as an adult? Is there an age beyond which we can presume sufficient maturity of judgment to hold an individual accountable enough to proceed with a trial in an adult venue and expose the person to the possibility of adult punishment?

Many of the cognitive and social-cognitive capabilities that are potentially relevant to the assessment of blameworthiness are the same as those that are relevant to the assessment of adjudicative competence. In order to be fully accountable for an act, for example, a person must commit the act voluntarily, knowingly, and with some ability form reasonable expectations of the likely or potential consequences of the act (Scott & Grisso, 1997). In this respect, logical decision-making and the ability to foresee the future ramifications of one's decisions are important to determinations of blameworthiness, just as they are to determinations of adjudicative competence. As we indicated in our earlier discussion of adjudicative competence, it is reasonable to assume that the average individual would be unlikely to have developed these abilities before age 12, but that the average individual would have developed these abilities by age 16.

Most studies of age differences in decision-making have focused on the cognitive processes involved (e.g., Fischoff, 1992). That is, they have considered the mechanics of decision-making in the absence of social and emotional factors that might influence the ways in which one's decision-making abilities are applied to real-world situations. These investigations have found few cognitive differences between adults and adolescents as young as 12 or 13. The prevailing wisdom, based on these studies, has been that cognitive differences between adolescents and adults are fewer and smaller than was previously believed. This has led some to argue that age differences in decision-making are due to age differences in concerns, not capabilities; if adolescents are more likely to act antisocially, it is because they have different values and priorities than adults, not different intellectual abilities.

Judging an individual as blameworthy presumes certain capacities that are emotional and interpersonal, and not simply cognitive in nature.

Judging an individual as blameworthy presumes certain capacities that are emotional and interpersonal, and not simply cognitive in nature, however. Among these psychosocial capabilities, for example, are the ability to control one's impulses, to manage one's behavior in the face of pressure from others to violate the law, or to extricate oneself from a potentially problematic situation. Many of these capabilities have been examined in research on what we broadly refer to as "judgment," because deficiencies in these realms would likely interfere with individuals' abilities to act in ways that demonstrate mature enough decision-making to qualify for adult-like accountability (e.g., Cauffman & Steinberg, 2000; Scott, Reppucci, & Woolard, 1995; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). In several previous publications (Cauffman & Steinberg, 1996, 2000; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996) we have suggested that these psychosocial factors fall into three broad categories: *responsibility* (the capacity to make a decision in an independent, self-reliant fashion), *perspective* (the capacity to place a decision within a broader temporal and interpersonal context), and *temperance* (the capacity to exercise self-restraint and control one's impulses). Our interest is in whether age differences in decision-making may in fact be attributable to psychosocial factors, and not simply to differences in values and priorities.

We have explored the relations between judgment and several aspects of psychosocial maturity within a sample of over 1,000 individuals (Cauffman and Steinberg, 2000). In this research, we examined age differences among 12- to 48-year-olds in psychosocial maturity and in their performance on a series of hypothetical judgment tasks designed to assess their likelihood of engaging in antisocial behavior (e.g., shoplifting, smoking marijuana, joy riding in a stolen car). Three overall patterns of findings from this study are relevant to the present discussion.

First, we found clear and significant age differences on the measure of decision-making in antisocial situations, with adults significantly less likely than adolescents to respond to the dilemmas in ways indicative of antisocial inclinations. Second, we found significant age differences on a wide array of measures of responsibility, perspective, and temperance, with adults consistently demonstrating more responsibility, greater perspective, and more temperance. Third, and most importantly, individuals who scored higher on these measures of psychosocial maturity were more likely to make socially responsible decisions in the hypothetical situations than those who were less psychosocially mature. In fact, once the differences in responsibility, perspective, and temperance were accounted for, age was no longer a significant predictor of

judgment. In other words, adolescents make poorer decisions than adults because adolescents are more psychosocially immature.

This conclusion, while seemingly obvious, differs from conclusions drawn from previous research on the cognitive underpinnings of decision-making, which suggested that adolescents make poorer decisions than adults because they have different priorities, not because they have different developmental capacities. If the latter is true, however, as our work suggests it is, age differences in judgment may be based in psychosocial immaturity, and not just reflective of rationally-based decisions that are based on different priorities and values. Viewing a criminal act as the result of *immature* judgment, rather than as the outcome of *bad* judgment, has important implications for determinations of blameworthiness.

One advantage of the juvenile court is that it is generally more flexible, and this flexibility permits juvenile court judges to take developmental immaturity into account in dispositional decision-making.

In sum, although there has been some research to date on the development of the various psychosocial factors potentially relevant to evaluations of blameworthiness, few studies have compared adolescents and adults directly on these dimensions, and fewer still have attempted to examine the relations between these psychosocial elements of judgment and decision-making in situations relevant to legal concerns. Nevertheless, it is clear from the little research that does exist (e.g., Cauffman & Steinberg, 2000) that few individuals demonstrate adult-like psychosocial maturity and, consequently, adult-like judgment, much before are 12, and that many individuals do not demonstrate adult-like psychosocial maturity or judgment even at age 17.

As we noted earlier, children as young as 9 have the capacity for intentional behavior and know the difference between right and wrong (Rest, 1983). As such, there is no reason why children of this age should automatically be held blameless for their conduct. But blameworthiness is a matter of degree, not a dichotomous condition, and it is clear that the vast majority of individuals below the age of 13 lack certain intellectual and psychosocial capabilities that need to be present in order to hold someone *fully* accountable for his or her actions *under certain circumstances*. These circumstances include situations that call for logical decision-making, situations in which the ultimate consequences of one's actions are not evident unless one has actually tried to foresee them, and situations in which sound judgment may be compromised by competing stimuli, such as very strong peer pressure to violate the law. Both the juvenile and criminal courts have mechanisms available to take such mitigating factors into account, including probation, a discounted sentence, or transfer back to the juvenile court from criminal court.

The relevance of research on blameworthiness to the specifics of the transfer debate concerns the criminal court's ability to accommodate juvenile immaturity in sentencing decisions. One advantage of the juvenile court is that it is generally more flexible, and this flexibility permits juvenile court judges to take developmental immaturity into account in dispositional decision-making. To the extent that sentencing within the adult system is less flexible, or even inflexible (e.g., when there are mandatory sentences for certain crimes), the more important developmental immaturity becomes as an argument to retain juvenile court jurisdiction for immature offenders. Regardless of the venue, however, when the individual under consideration is younger than 17, it seems to us that developmentally-normative immaturity should be added to the list of possible mitigating factors, along with the more typical ones of self-defense, mental state, and extenuating circumstances.

Research and Theory on Amenability

Amenability means something slightly different to developmental psychologists than it does under the law. In legal practice, amenability refers to the likelihood of an individual desisting from crime and/or being rehabilitated when treated with some sort of intervention that is available within the community at the time of adjudication. To developmental psychologists, however, amenability refers to the extent to which an individual's nature has the potential to change, regardless of his or her exposure to an intervention, and regardless of the type of intervention that is applied. In other words, to developmental psychologists, amenability refers to malleability or, as it is sometimes known, "plasticity."

Although these different definitions of amenability are similar, they present different standards by which to judge an individual's likelihood of desistance. An offender may be at a point in development where he or she is still malleable, but may have little likelihood of desisting from crime unless exposed to the proper set of environmental changes (such as an intensive intervention, relocation to a different community, a change of peer group, availability of legal employment, etc.).

Malleability (the extent to which one *can* change) is thus relevant only if it is taken advantage of by a rehabilitation program to which the individual is amenable (i.e., a program that makes effective *use* of the individual's malleability).

Amenability is probably the most practical basis on which to make decisions about how a serious juvenile offender should be treated. It makes little sense to invest the rehabilitative resources of the juvenile justice system in individuals who are unlikely to change and a great deal of sense to target such resources at those individuals most likely to respond to intervention or treatment. For this reason, amenability is frequently a factor in decisions regarding the transfer of juveniles to criminal court. In *Kent v. United States* (1966), the U.S. Supreme Court defined the due process requirements for transfer hearings, listing eight criteria to be considered in making transfer decisions. Foremost among these are the seriousness of the offense and the need to protect the community, the maturity of the juvenile, and the juvenile's amenability to treatment and rehabilitation. Although all states require consideration of the seriousness of the offense and community safety, however, not all require a consideration of the juvenile's amenability to treatment, or of the juvenile's maturity (Redding, 1997).

Developmentalists might ask whether there is an age below which one can presume that most individuals have the capacity to change and an age above which most people's amenability has diminished enough that they are unlikely to respond effectively to rehabilitation.

In practice, judgments about amenability are made on an individualized basis, with decision-makers taking into account a juvenile's current circumstances, psychological history, and responses to prior interventions, if any. From a developmental perspective, however, the amenability question can be reframed as a question about general tendencies toward malleability at given ages, rather than statements about particular individuals. In other words, developmentalists might ask whether there is an age below which one can presume that most individuals have the capacity to change and an age above which most people's amenability has diminished enough that they are unlikely to respond effectively to rehabilitation. If these questions could be answered definitively, at least some of the decision-making about an individual's amenability to treatment could be done on the basis of age.

Unfortunately, developmental research does not provide a satisfactory answer to these questions. The bulk of the data on the stability of personality traits suggests that individuals do indeed become less likely to change over the course of adolescence and adulthood, suggesting a possible decline in malleability over the course of development. But data on the over-time increase in the stability of personality characteristics do not speak to the question of whether change is *possible*, because estimates of personality stability do not inform questions about malleability. Observing boulders for long periods of time might suggest that they tend to remain where they are put, but provides no indication of whether these boulders might move if pushed. Similarly, even if it were shown that antisocial tendencies were stable over time, this does not tell us that such tendencies cannot be changed by altering the individual's environment; only tells us that these tendencies do *not* change if the environment is *not* altered.

Because any judgment of amenability presumes not only individual malleability but at least some change in context – that is, amenability by definition under the law presumes some sort of intervention – it is impossible to evaluate an individual's amenability without considering the nature of the intervention to which the individual is going to be exposed, and whether there is reason to believe that this particular intervention will be effective for this particular individual. Rather than make amenability judgments on the basis of age, therefore, developmental research would indicate that such judgments should be made on the basis of past experience. A youngster who has been exposed to certain types of interventions in the past and who has not responded to them effectively is relatively unlikely to respond to them in the future. Without such evidence, however, one would presume malleability in response to intervention.

The evidence on the development of antisocial behavior seems, at first glance, to be paradoxical, at least as far as the interconnections among chronological age, amenability, and the debate over serious juvenile offenders is concerned. Despite our intuition that we can be more hopeful about individuals' potential for change when they are young than when they are older, there is fairly good evidence that the earlier a minor begins to engage in antisocial or violent behavior, the more likely it is that such behavior will persist to adulthood (Moffitt, 1993). In particular, minors whose first offense occurs in preadolescence are less likely to desist than

those whose first offense occurs during late adolescence. These findings seem to lead to the counterintuitive, if not outright peculiar, conclusion that we should view young juvenile offenders as inherently less amenable than older ones, that the best candidates for rehabilitation are older adolescents, and that the juvenile offenders who may most warrant incapacitation are the youngest, not the oldest, ones.

The argument crumbles, however, when one considers that these findings on age of onset and patterns of reoffending describe the natural course of desistance, rather than the effectiveness of intervention programs. There is a substantial literature in developmental psychology which suggests that patterns of problem behavior, if not corrected, become self-sustaining (Steinberg & Avenevoli, 2000). Antisocial youngsters, for example, often are rebuffed by their prosocial peers and, as a consequence, end up socializing with other antisocial youngsters, who likely encourage and reward further antisocial behavior (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, & Gariepy, 1988). Thus, while younger offenders may be less likely to desist on their own (as one might reasonably expect in the absence of external corrective influences), they may nevertheless be more responsive to focused rehabilitation programs when they are applied, just as they seem to be responsive to the negative influence of antisocial peers. Common sense suggests that earlier intervention with juvenile offenders is more likely to succeed than later intervention, but there is a vital need for research on this subject.

Overall, however, there is no basis in the developmental literature from which to draw generalizations about differences in amenability as a function of age. Despite our optimistic notions about the inherent malleability of young people, or our pessimistic notions about the inability of old dogs to learn new tricks, there is no research that supports either of these contentions, and some research that actually challenges them. As a consequence, we can not recommend the implementation of age-based policies regarding the treatment of serious juvenile offenders solely on the basis of research and theory on amenability. More specifically, it is incorrect to suggest that there is an age below which individuals should remain treated as juveniles because they are especially likely to be amenable to change, or an age beyond which individuals should be categorically assumed to be too hardened to be helped. Amenability decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis and should focus on the prior history, rather than the chronological age, of the offender.

A Developmental Perspective on the Transfer of Juveniles to the Criminal Court

A developmental perspective can inform, but can not settle, the transfer debate. Even setting aside the weighty political, practical, and moral questions that impinge on the discussion, the developmental analysis we have presented here does not point to any one age that politicians and practitioners should use in formulating transfer policies or practices. Instead, we encourage those engaged in the debate to view young offenders as falling into three broad categories: juveniles, who should not be adjudicated in adult court; adults, who should; and youths, who may or may not be developmentally appropriate candidates for transfer depending on their individual characteristics and circumstances.

In general, it appears to us appropriate to raise serious concerns based on developmental evidence about the transfer of individuals under 13 to adult court owing to their limited adjudicative competence as well as the very real possibility that most individuals this young will not prove to be sufficiently blameworthy to warrant exposure to the harsh consequences of a criminal court adjudication; individuals younger than 13 should continue to be viewed as juveniles, regardless of the nature of their offense. At the other end of the continuum, it appears, from a developmental perspective, appropriate to conclude that the vast majority of individuals

Common sense suggests that earlier intervention with juvenile offenders is more likely to succeed than later intervention, but there is a vital need for research on this subject.

17 and older are not appreciably different from adults in ways that would prohibit their fair adjudication within the criminal justice system. Our sense is that variability among individuals between the ages of 13 and 16 requires that some sort of individualized assessment of an offender's competence to stand trial, blameworthiness, and likely amenability to treatment be made before reaching a transfer decision.

The irony of employing a developmental perspective in the analysis of transfer policy is that the exercise reveals the inherent inadequacy of policies that draw bright-line distinctions between adolescence and adulthood. Indeed, an analysis of the developmental literature indicates that variability among

adolescents of a given chronological age is the rule, not the exception. In order to be true to what we know about development, a fair transfer policy must be able to accommodate this variability. The most effective way to do this is to widen the "bright line" distinction between juveniles and adults into a formally acknowledged "gray area" that includes youths for whom age alone is an unreliable indicator of their development and, hence, the appropriateness of their waiver to criminal court.

Notes

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[2] To be sure, the criminal court recognizes that *some* adults are incompetent, incapable of behaving responsibly, or excellent candidates for rehabilitation, and it even has options available for accommodating these special circumstances, but it historically has defined these cases as exceptional. Demonstrating that there exist adults who are as immature as juveniles may certainly warrant the maintenance of options for dealing with these special cases, but it does not necessarily follow that such evidence challenges the logic of having a standing age-based boundary between juveniles and adults, any more than this logic would be challenged by demonstrating that there are juveniles who are exceptionally mature for their age. That is, it is perfectly reasonable to erect age-based legal boundaries that are based on population averages while being cognizant of the fact that some individuals may end up being treated unfairly because their competencies are not typical for people of their chronological age. The issue is not whether age-based legal boundaries should exist, but whether the presumptions behind a particular boundary are reasonable ones.

[3] Although juveniles tried in criminal court often have adults who ostensibly are helping them make these decisions (e.g., attorneys, parents), the law leaves no doubt that the ultimate decision-maker in these instances is the defendant, even when the defendant is young.

[4] It is worth noting that some legal scholars have argued that criminal court is perfectly capable of taking into account juveniles' diminished culpability by punishing juveniles less severely or in a qualitatively different fashion. This is, in fact, what Feld (1997) has argued in his writings on what he has called the "youth discount," or what others believe can be accomplished through "blended sentencing" or through other administrative structures, such as New York City's "youth part" of the criminal court (see Fagan & Zimring, 2000). For the most part, though, the criminal justice system is less flexible than the juvenile justice system in its ability to fit the punishment to the characteristics of the offender.

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